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THE AUTOGRAPH HUNTER AND
OTHER PAPERS

By ADRIAN HOFFMAN JOLINE

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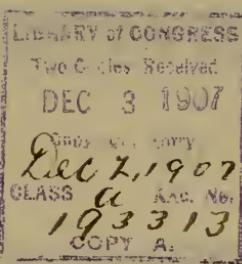


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NOTE.

The title of this small volume is rather misleading, for it contains less about autographs than it does about Van Buren. But as these divarications are privately printed, nobody can very well complain. Only a few personal friends will ever read the papers, and they will probably utter no complaint. When the book is on the shelf, where it will undoubtedly repose during most of its existence, the title it bears will look as well as any other.

New York, November, 1906.

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IN a recent number of the *Independent* a gentleman who describes himself as an "autographomaniac," and who manifestly possesses what Mr. Gilbert calls a pretty taste for paradox, has taken up the cudgels on behalf of the unpopular persons who "write for autographs," and while he confesses that his pursuit is "shocking," he is brave enough to declare that he is "willing to take the consequences." I fully agree with him in his characterization of his nefarious habit, and am content to submit his case, as he makes it, to the tribunal of public opinion, without argument on behalf of the respondent. He is welcome to the consequences, whatever they may be. I suspect that his screed is not to be taken very seriously, and that he is emulating De Quincy's treatise on Murder as a Fine Art.

He has incited me, however, to utter a few more words about autographs, because he does me the honor to say "Such distinguished col-

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lectors as Dr. G. Birkbeck Hill and Mr. Adrian Joline turn up their noses at my kind," and he makes some jocose but unworthy reflections upon my method of cultivating my hobby. He betrays himself as not a real collector, as only an amateur, who has not approached the shrine with proper reverence and preparation. Dr. Birkbeck Hill was in his lifetime a scholar and a clever literary man, devoted to the altar of Samuel Johnson, and he wrote a pleasant book called "Talks About Autographs," but he was not a collector in the ordinary acceptation of the term, and I am by no means a "distinguished" collector, although I thank the Maniac for conferring upon me a title honorable but wholly undeserved. What amuses me most about the ravings of the Maniac is the assertion that collectors of my own way of thinking buy at auctions and through dealers "dry-as-dust letters written for the most part by men long since gone to their fathers," while the "pestilential nuisances," to borrow another Gilbertian phrase, confine their attention to autographs of the living, and especially prize the peppery responses they receive from persecuted greatness. It reminds us of the ancient fable about the Oxford guide who exhibited to his party the eminent Jowett, the noted head

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of Balliol College, wrathful and indignant at the assault upon his study window, and of the individual whose favorite boast was that he had been soundly kicked by a Royal Duke. "Such and so various are the tastes of men."

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, in his *Ponkapog Papers*, speaks of "the average autograph hunter with his purposeless insistence"—"the innumerable unknown who 'collect' autographs as they would postage stamps, with no interest in the matter beyond the desire to accumulate as many as possible." He tells of an instance where a fellow author was asked by a bereaved widow and mother to copy for her some lines from his poem on the death of a child, to comfort her for the loss of her little girl. Two months later he found his manuscript with a neat price attached to it in a second-hand book shop. I am well pleased to be excluded from that class of autograph hunters, and I do not envy the Maniac who cares to array himself in such an unworthy company.

We occasionally buy the letters of the living, and some time ago the newspapers were quite stirred up by the sale of a letter from the Prince of Wales—now Edward VII.—to Mrs. Langtry, for the respectable price of ninety dollars. Even the journals which make pretensions to

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decency and good taste broke forth in clamor, one of them sneering at the alleged value of collecting as a preservative of literary and historical treasures, and another announcing with oracular finality that the incident proved the "snobbishness" of collectors. All these deductions based upon insufficient premises, are the offspring of imperfect intelligence, and the evidence of that tendency to hasty judgment which marks the utterances of the uninformed and unreflecting person. The chances are that the bidder was unconsciously competing, through an agent, with some rival who had given an order without a limit; or that the owner was making what is known in Wall street as a "washed sale" in order to establish a market price for a number of similar specimens of royal autography. I heard a rumor that a faithless maid of the famous actress stole a quantity of letters from her mistress, and that the vendee was endeavoring to "realize" on the ill-gotten booty. But whether these conjectures are well founded or not, it is certainly quite easy to understand why a letter from so distinguished a personage to a noted beauty, an ornament of the stage, should possess an interest for a collector wholly apart from any element of snobbishness.

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Before me lies a faded pamphlet, a copy of "The Atheneum, or Spirit of the English Magazines," published in Boston, on January 1, 1828, containing articles unblushingly appropriated from British periodicals in the days when our own periodicals were feeble, few and far between. Among them is one on "Autographs," beginning with these words: "In direct opposition to the established maxim, 'A living dog is better than a dead lion,' the autograph of a dead man is better than that of a living one; indeed, the longer a man has been dead, the better the autograph."

The genial Maniac—who is not as mad as he pretends to be—may whimsically dispute this proposition, but it is an eternal verity, far beyond the power of any of us to controvert successfully. As with the pictures of famous artists, the price increases when the source of supply is cut off, and the value is measured by the price.

I am glad to have my friend draw upon himself the lightning of great men's wrath, because some day the thunderers will be dead, and his specimens, heroically gathered in defiance of their indignant bolts, will be lovingly cherished by disciples of the cult whose coat-tails are immune to the kicks of enraged statesmen and

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authors. It is true, nevertheless, that mere "autographs by request" are of little value in the eyes of a wise collector; even when they have the spice of bitter resentment they are by no means precious.

In a curiously unappreciative paper concerning the beloved Autocrat, Oliver Wendell Holmes, included by Andrew Lang in his "Adventures Among Books," Mr. Lang says of the delectable Doctor: "He was even too good-humored, and the worst thing I have ever heard of him is that he could never say 'no' to an autograph hunter." Surely Lang intended this accusation to be a gentle commendation, but I fear that the casual reader will fail to detect the subtle humor of it. Treating it seriously, for the casual reader's sake, I own my inability to find in the amiable weakness any good reason for criticism or for censure. I admit that if these pests of great men had made demands upon the Doctor's purse they would have been seeking only trash, according to the dictum of the author of *Othello*—whoever that author may have been—and that by requesting his autograph they were endeavoring to take from him his good name, but only as inscribed upon a sheet of innocent paper and by no means making him "poor indeed." I am

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convinced that the sneers and cavils of those who pronounce harsh judgments upon the seekers of autographs are only the manifestations of ignorant illiberality like the old complaints which are uttered from time to time about "uncut" books, deckel edges, first editions, and dainty bindings. These denunciations resemble the outcries of those who possess not the fragrant automobile against the plutocrat who monopolizes our highways, drives us from our paths with imperious tootings, frightens our humble horses, and occasionally downs us in the dust. When we are not of his class, we scold him bitterly, but if we come to that state of affluence which enables us to join his ranks, we quickly assume his autocratic demeanor towards those who merely cumber the earth with their slow-moving vehicles, horse-drawn, crawling along without benefit of gasoline or of electricity. Probably the Merovingian kings with their ox-chariots were fiercely hostile to the swift pacer or trotter. "It all depends" as they say in the *Mikado*. I do not love the automobile; it is typical of a certain vulgarity of the rich. If I needed rapidity of motion, I would prefer to travel in the cab of an engine on the Twentieth Century Limited. I do not dote upon polo or bridge, but I keep

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silent about them because I know that my neighbor's tastes may lawfully be indulged whatever I may think about them and whether or not they accord with mine. As the pleasant writer of The Upton Letters remarks, "It does not matter how much people disagree, if they will only admit in their minds that every one has a right to a point of view, and that their own does not necessarily rule out all others." I am disposed to love my neighbor as myself, as good people are instructed to do, but the task is often arduous. I ask only that he will patiently indulge me in my fondness for my favorite books and my pet autographs, which cannot possibly interfere with his personal comfort as his automobile does with mine

Almost every one who reads and who really thinks has a pleasure in looking at autographs. In the great library of the Vatican I have observed the eager interest with which the visitors gaze upon the handwriting of Henry VIII., of Anne Boleyn, and of Martin Luther, the latter being oddly preserved in a place where one would scarcely expect to find it. The throngs who contemplate the wonderful collection in the British Museum testify to the fascination which clings to the actual pen-tracings made by men and women of historic

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fame, and the multitudes who visit the Library of Congress in Washington linger over the glass-covered cabinets where the letters of our Presidents, as well as of many other noted public men, grouped with their portraits, are admirably arranged for inspection by the curious.

The interest of many examples in collections is purely autographic—that is to say, the simple fact that the lines were inscribed by the particular person is the chief stimulant of the beholder's imagination. It may be merely a formal document to which only the signature of Queen Elizabeth, or of Napoleon, or of Charles I. of England, or of Washington is affixed; it may be nothing but a line or two penned by Samuel Johnson, or by Dean Swift, by William Pitt, or by Cardinal Richelieu—the effect is produced, and no one who has a spark of fancy can fail to gain some pleasure from the contemplation, for example, of an official paper bearing the names of Charles II. and Samuel Pepys, or a parchment scroll subscribed by Oliver Cromwell. It is a simple matter to advance from this point to the delight of reading original letters and manuscripts of intrinsic merit, and with the charm of reading comes the joy of possession. It is

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a joy whose nature is absolutely different from that which a bibliophile experiences when he gloats over his precious "first edition," or hugs to his bosom his invaluable Caxton. Sometimes there may be a sense of pride in the ownership of a thing which no one else can own, and we may detect the note of triumph sounded in the boast occasionally uttered by even the most modest of my class—"No specimen, sir, in the British Museum!" But the real delight is in the feeling of companionship with the man who wrote the letter or the book. The true autograph hunter may live with Lamb, talk with Macaulay, listen to Dr. Johnson, gaze upon Thackeray at the Garrick, and stand in the presence of Pope and Dryden. If these are the results of devotion to "musty-dusty stuff," then let my amiable lunatic of Madison, Wisconsin, in the immortal words of Patrick Henry, "make the most of it."

It is strange that the autograph collector is scorned and despised by the majority. Perhaps it is because most men do not reflect about that which is of no immediate interest to them. It may be that it comes from the resentment which the many are apt to feel towards the few who are devoted to some rather exclusive pursuit; for the concrete autograph itself usu-

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ally arouses the attention of any intelligent person. I have an idea that the depreciation comes from a certain affectation on the part of great men, and the shallow acquiescence of the careless newspaper scribblers in what they deem to be the popular judgment. Like the early Christians, we survive our persecutions. We know that unpopularity is a poor test of merit. It would be a sad day if collecting should ever become popular, as golfing is and as "bicycling" was. I have a keen sympathy with the English schoolmaster who said that golf and drink were the two curses of the country.

No less famous a man than Nathaniel Hawthorne has recorded his views about autographs. When he had before him a book containing letters of statesmen and soldiers of the Revolution, he put himself in the class of autograph lovers. I cite his very words, because, much to my astonishment, I find that he expresses my own feelings much more eloquently than I am able to do. "They are profitable reading in a quiet afternoon," he said, "and in a mode withdrawn from too intimate relation with the present time; so that we can glide backward some three-quarters of a century, and surround ourselves with the ominous sublimity of circumstances that then frowned

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upon the writers. * * * They are magic scrolls, if read in the right spirit. The roll of the drum and the fanfare of the trumpet is latent in some of them; and in others, an echo of the oratory that resounded in the old halls of the Continental Congress, at Philadelphia; or the words may come to us as with the living utterance of one of those illustrious men, speaking face to face, in friendly communion. Strange, that the mere identity of paper and ink should be so powerful. The same thoughts might look cold and ineffectual in a printed book. Human nature craves a certain materialism, and clings pertinaciously to what is tangible, as if that were of more importance than the spirit accidentally involved in it. And, in truth, the original manuscript has always something which print itself must inevitably lose. An erasure, even a blot, a casual irregularity of hand, and all such little imperfections of mechanical execution, bring us close to the writer, and perhaps convey some of those subtle intimations for which language has no shape. * * * * There are said to be temperaments endowed with sympathies so exquisite that, by merely handling an autograph, they can detect the writer's character with unerring accuracy, and read his

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inmost heart as easily as a less gifted eye would peruse the written page. Our faith in this power, be it a spiritual one, or only a refinement of the physical nature, is not unlimited, in spite of evidence. God has imparted to the human soul a marvellous strength in guarding its secrets, and he keeps at least the deepest and most inward record for his own perusal. But if there be such sympathies as we have alluded to, in how many instances would History be put to the blush by a volume of autograph letters, like this which we now close!"¹

Even in a sedate student of history, a new emotion may be produced by the actual and visible presence of such a letter as this, from Charles II., which speaks to me of a kindly heart, whatever we may think of the morals of England's Merry Monarch.

As Mr. Choate said recently in a notable public address, "he was a jovial blade," and I am glad to add, for it echoes my sentiments, our eloquent ex-Ambassador remarked that "James II. was the limit."

¹ A Book of Autographs: Hawthorne's Works, Ed. 1889, Vol. XII., 88.

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"Whitehall, 10 Jan., 1684.

Harry Sidney. I would have you assure Temple that I am very kinde to him, and if he can compasse the match he designes at Paris, I will use my best offices with the king of France to make it in all points as easy to him as I can.

Charles R."

I trust that no disrespect is implied in spelling the word "king" with a small "K."

Coming to a much later day, it is surely of interest to read what George Bancroft thought of President Andrew Johnson, particularly in view of the recent discovery, from the Johnson papers in the Congressional Library, that the first message of that much-abused president, a state paper much admired and wondered at when it appeared, was drafted by America's most distinguished historian. He is writing to Adam Badeau. "I knew Andrew Johnson thoroughly well," he says, "having once lived near him where I saw him every day and had the most unreserved intercourse with him. I then held and now hold that his arraignment was an act of injustice, and that he was on his trial thoroughly entitled to acquittal. The man had faults enough, ambition enough; but his unvaried intention was, to maintain fidelity to the Constitution and keep

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within its bounds." Mr. Bancroft differed on this subject from that marplot, Edwin M. Stanton, who conspired with Buchanan, abused Lincoln, vilified and ruined McClellan, attempted to destroy Johnson, and perished miserably, to be handed down to inconsiderate posterity by partisan writers as our "Great War Secretary."

If we look upon Bancroft on that literary side which was, after all, the most attractive side of his character, we cannot fail to be brought closer to him when we have before us, in his own distinct and very literary handwriting, what he wrote to Bayard Taylor in 1864. "Mr. Lang has just left with me your chant for Bryant's 70th birthday. It is admirable. I expected good from you; and you have done exceedingly well. You need never regret that you made this most successful effort.

* * * You are too modest. Your parts are *never* of the past." I am sorry to say that Mr. Bancroft then proceeds to suggest amendments of Taylor's verses, which I will not quote. The "Mr. Lang" mentioned in the letter is not Andrew the All-knowing, but Louis Lang, an artist of New York, who composed the music for Taylor's ode, which was sung at the "Century" on the night of November 5th, 1864, when

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—Bancroft presiding and Emerson, Holmes and a host of others assembled—that Association commemorated the arrival of the beloved poet at the age of three score and ten.

The innate modesty of Hawthorne shines out in this brief letter, which he wrote from Lenox in December, 1850, after he had given to the world "The Scarlet Letter," and had ceased to be what he once styled himself, "the obscurest man of letters in America." I do not know the name of the person to whom it was written: but that is of no moment. He writes: "I am gratified that you think me worth biographizing; and as soon as I get a book off my hands, I will see what I can do towards your purpose. You will not find it a life of many incidents. I could wish (not for the first time) that I were personally known to you, and could impart the requisite materials from one corner of the fireside to the other." That this expression was sincere, there can be no question; it does not bear out the idea that Hawthorne was an unsocial person, shunning his fellow-beings. But I must not indulge too freely in my fondness for my own treasures.

Sometimes the satisfaction in the possession of "something which no one else can own," is seriously lessened by the discovery that some

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one else has a prize which he fondly believes to be the very thing which I cherish so lovingly. I have had at least three severe shocks but I have survived them. My letter of Oliver Wendell Holmes to Parsons, the translator of the "Inferno," dated in 1867, was printed in the "Century" for October, 1901, in an article by Maria S. Porter, with a few verbal changes of no moment but dated "1869," and the writer asserted that she was "the fortunate possessor of it." In my anxiety, I wrote to her at the address given to me by the publishers of the magazine, and told her courteously of my predicament. I received no reply, and as my letter was not returned to me I inferred that possibly the lady had once owned the Holmes letter but had parted with it before her article appeared. Years ago I purchased what was called the manuscript of Moore's "Epicurean," covering one hundred and forty-seven pages of the two hundred and eleven comprised in the edition of 1839.

Within a short time I saw in the catalogue of the sale of Le Gallienne's autographs, an announcement of "The Manuscript of Thomas Moore's Epicurean." Later it was sold in Bishop Hurst's collection, and the purchaser kindly allowed me to examine it. Mr. Bow-

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den, associated with George H. Richmond, is always considerate and I thank him for his courtesy. His manuscript is what he calls it — “original manuscript of the original draft;” contained in a blank book, a preliminary sketch, and valuable enough, while mine is manifestly the copy sent to the printer.

I have what I am quite sure is the manuscript of Barry Cornwall’s “Life of Charles Lamb,” a thick volume whose sheets seem, like my Moore’s pages, to be those which the compositors handled. But when the aforesaid collection of the worthy Bishop was disposed of at auction, there was another “Manuscript of Barry Cornwall’s Life of Charles Lamb” offered to a confiding public. I have seen this also, and while it is bound in a style quite similar to mine, it is much smaller and appears to be only a rough draft of a portion of the book. The Bishop and I seem to have been enamored of drafts. These fables teach us not to be unduly puffed up about our “author’s manuscripts;” there may be several of the same work, for great books are not thrown off at a single sitting.

An English dealer once pointed out to me, by way of temptation to a patriotic American, the alleged manuscript of “My Country, ‘Tis

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of Thee," and was quite depressed in spirit when I told him that good old Doctor Smith spent a large part of his declining years in producing autograph copies of his one famous poem; and Holmes, in his generous way, did not disdain to turn out copies of "Old Iron-sides" and "The Last Leaf"—precious things, even if not the originals.

The number of genuine collectors in the United States is not large, but it is increasing. To those of us whose appetite has not yet been satiated, it is discouraging to observe the rise in the prices of desirable autographs. The *Atheneum* article from which I have already quoted, refers to contemporaneous auction values, and speaks of Cromwell at five guineas, Francis I. at four shillings, Sir Francis Walsingham with five added signatures at nine shillings, Lord Nelson at two pounds fifteen shillings, and Gibbon at eight shillings.

Before me is a manuscript catalogue of a leading London house in which Cromwell figures at eighteen pounds twelve shillings, Francis I. at ten pounds, Walsingham at thirty-five pounds, and Gibbon at two pounds fifteen shillings. At a sale in London in May, 1904, a letter of Nelson to Lady Hamilton brought one thousand and thirty pounds—it

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seems an absurd price. The "Evening Post" bibliophile intimates that it is likely that "two agents at the sale had unlimited bids from long-pursed buyers, and each determined to outbid the other, and both lost their heads." I am pleased to find one of my theories about these tremendous prices sustained by such a competent authority. There are other reasons for the differences in sale values. The importance of the contents of letter or document, the sudden increase in the fame of the writer, and the anxiety of some enthusiast to obtain the one specimen needed to complete a "set," are all factors. Ten years ago the eighteen lines which now confront me in the rather boyish scrawl of Theodore Roosevelt might have been found in the "seventy-five cent list," but it cost me ten dollars—a fact which illustrates the truth of the adage concerning the unwise person and his supply of coin, more forcible than polite. It suggests the idea that the problem of what to do with our ex-Presidents is more easily solved than we had supposed. Ten autograph letters a day at ten dollars each would afford a respectable income, although there would be danger of overstocking the market; but Congress might establish a fixed price, deriving its

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power in that regard from the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution.

Bearing in mind the record contained in the *Atheneum*, it is not unlikely that the man who bought wisely in 1828 might have left a legacy to his descendants far more valuable than city lots in upper New York, which have enriched so many members of our modern automobilistic aristocracy. Regarded as an investment, I am inclined to believe that a well-selected collection of autograph letters may be, in the long run, superior to Chicago street railway stocks or Ship-Building bonds. It is true that autographs pay no dividends; but we know that, and we never know whether we are to get our income from what we are pleased to call our "securities." There is great satisfaction in being certain about something. I know that there has been offered to me for a dozen Revolutionary War letters, signed by Washington, double the amount I paid for them a few years ago, and I cannot say as much for any of the beautifully engraved certificates or evidences of indebtedness of "railways" or "industrials." I suppose the name "industrials" was adopted because of the energy with which the promoters "worked" the community. The real collector, however, has

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small regard for the sordid side of the occupation. I would not part with my Washingtons for many times their cost, but I like to think that somebody covets them.

When the Maniac charges me with turning up my nose at his kind, he is mistaken. I am not what Miss Squeers called "a turned-up-nose peacock,"—far from it. Dickens remarked that a peacock with a turned-up nose is a novelty in ornithology and a thing not commonly seen. A collector of autographs who turns up his nose at any other collector is just as much of a novelty. The collector who deserves the name is comprehensive in his affections; nothing collectorial is alien to him. He would indeed be an offensive creature who would scorn the feeblest efforts of an aspirant, the incipient struggles of a neophyte whose untutored mind is striving to attain the ultimate goal of ambition. I remember that in my salad days I deliberately destroyed a large number of interesting letters of public men in order to save only the signatures, and yet I escaped an indictment for malicious mischief. We must all have our beginnings; we must pass through the trying ordeals of infancy, of boyhood, and of young manhood. There are many stages of the malady which Edmund

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Gosse calls "collectaneomania."

A veteran collector would no more dream of distorting his nasal organ in the presence of youthful ignorance than Grant or Lee would have thought of sneering at a cadet, or Choate or Carter would have despised a recent graduate of Chase's Law School, or a Bachelor of Laws just out of Cambridge or Columbia. It is delightful to observe the protoplasmic germ of a collector. No one can tell what may come of it. It may develop into greatness.

THE DEFECTION OF DOCTOR SPRAGUE

THE DEFECTION OF DOCTOR SPRAGUE

MANY disparaging remarks have been made about collectors of autographs by men of varying degrees of intelligence. For some reason, but I have never been able to discover exactly what it is, the plain persons, and even some who consider themselves much superior to plain persons, are filled with unholy glee whenever they find an opportunity to utter expressions of scorn and contempt concerning those of their fellow beings who gather autographs and treasure the written words of the famous. These expressions are in most cases coupled with sarcastic allusions to postage stamps, and every man appears to believe that the idea of associating a stamp collector and an autograph collector is entirely original with him. I have amused myself at divers times by recounting some of these censorious observations and in endeavoring to fathom the mystery of their genesis, while venturing mildly to demonstrate their injustice. I confess that the latest ex-

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ample which has been brought to my attention has given me more pain and surprise than any of its predecessors. We have been assailed and vilified in the house of our friends, and if one may be permitted to use a trite expression, attributed to a personage whose autograph would adorn even the British Museum, one may well cry out, "*Et tu Brute!*"

No collector deserving the name is unaware of the proud eminence which has always been awarded to the Reverend William Buel Sprague, D. D., the grandfather of us all, who from his Albanian eyrie dispensed autograph letters throughout the land, and with delightful liberality shared his stores with his brethren of the cult, while reserving for his own a splendid mass of rare Americana. The enthusiastic Draper says of him that he "fills a distinguished and unique place in the history of American literature and is accorded on all hands the highest rank among the early American autograph collectors." Was he not the man who furnished to Doctor Emmet the peerless Lynch letter, the envy of all collectors, now buried in the New York Public Library? I hear rumors of another letter, said to belong to Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, but I have my doubts. From the description of it given to

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me, I think it must be the one which is printed in Draper's "Autographic Collections" and is shown to be a forgery. I had acquired a reverence for the worthy Doctor equal to that with which the devotee of Christian Science regards Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, or to that which we are assured on unimpeachable authority, the heathen exhibits when he bows down to wood and stone. But within a few days past a kind Bostonian, actuated by generous impulse, although perhaps not wholly lacking in sarcastic humor, gave me a book called "Visits to European Celebrities, by William B. Sprague, D. D.," from the library of Governor Charles H. Bell, of New Hampshire, which contains an original autograph letter of the excellent dominie, written undoubtedly to Bell himself. The astonishing tenor of this letter leads me to present it in all its hideousness:

"Albany, 18 April, '68.

"My dear sir: Your kind letter has set me to looking through a part of my collection to see if I could find duplicates of any of your names on your list, and the result, as you will see, is a very meagre contribution. Such as they are, however, you are entirely welcome to them. As a friend, I would advise you to have as lit-

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tle to do with an autograph collector as possible, for though there are some honorable exceptions, yet, as a class, I think they rank A No. 1 in point of meanness.

"Very truly yours,

W. B. Sprague"

I acknowledge that on the first perusal of this remarkable epistle I was stricken with the sort of stupor which used to overcome the Virgilian hero when he succumbed to circumstances and "*vox faucibus hæsit.*" After having battled with all the indictments found by the grand jury of the public, the charges of covetousness, selfishness, impudence, silliness, uselessness, born of the plenitude of popular misinformation, and after what I had vainly deemed my triumphant pleas to those indictments, sustained, as I fondly imagined, by the courts of highest jurisdiction—to be confronted now with an accusation based upon the shameless confession of a co-conspirator, the shocking admissions of a *particeps criminis*, the State's evidence of a faithless associate, made my heart fail me for a moment, and my soul to grow sad as I said, "but it was even thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend!" Figuratively, Doctor Sprague was all of that to me, although I must own that his birth

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antedates mine a little over half a century, and I never had the good fortune to enjoy his actual personal acquaintance. It would not have astonished me more had Doctor Emmet denounced the Signers, Danforth or Greenough sneered at Continental Congressmen, or any member of the tribe of Benjamin proclaimed the folly of buying autographs in the market. I could more easily have believed that Dodd could be divorced from Mead, Houghton from Mifflin, Kuhn from Loeb, or Arnold from Constable. If Mr. Hearst and his gentle and refined newspapers had suddenly nominated Rockefeller for the Presidency, or if the New York *Tribune* had blazed out in condemnation of protective tariffs, they would not have given me as serious a shock as did this utterance of the venerable Sprague. But there lies the record, and with an effort I summon what remains of my intellect in order to apply myself to a calm consideration of this unexpected situation.

We are at a disadvantage at the outset, because the evidence upon which the charge is based has not been submitted to our scrutiny. A good deal of the merit of a cause depends upon the proofs which are presented in its support. It is not difficult to formulate a complaint, but it is sometimes hard to bring

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the witnesses up to the necessities of the case. I once had a client who would come into the office just before the trial of his action and, rubbing his hands in a genial way, cry out "Well, what do you want us to swear to?" But he was an exception, for they generally exhibit a strong disinclination to testify to the point and make strenuous efforts to evade it. It would have been a pleasure to question the frank and honest Doctor, but unfortunately he is beyond the reach of cross-examination. What tales he might have unfolded! Alas, they are buried with him. We may only analyze the accusation and endeavor to determine its justice or its injustice by methods which are not permitted by the rules of evidence.

Meanness means the mean. The mean is the low-minded, base, wanting in integrity, poor, pitiful, stingy. Meanness is a low state, poorness, want of dignity or excellence, want of liberality. I must be right about this, for I am quoting from a standard dictionary. On behalf of the fraternity of autograph collectors, and without a fee—unprofessional as it may seem—I enter a plea of "not guilty." When Doctor Sprague penned those fatal lines, he was suffering no doubt from some experience of a painful nature with a pseudo-collector, a mere

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Jeremy Diddler of a collector, who being aware of the dominie's sweet simplicity of character and willingness to help the aspiring neophyte, had attempted to impose upon him for purposes of sordid gain.

One great difficulty which a reasonable man encounters in the course of his life—and I consider myself the only truly reasonable man of my acquaintance—is the unfortunate tendency of other men to indulge in generalizations. Almost all generalizations are dangerous, fallacious, and fraught with violations of the rules of logic. Journeying in Canada some years ago in the society of an eminent author of our day, we met a lad who suffered from a bad cough, and some hours later we came upon another boy who was laboring under a similar affliction. My literary friend thereupon delivered himself of this solemn judgment: "All small boys in Canada have coughs." We are familiar with the story of the Englishman visiting Germany for the first time, and after a single hour's experience in a railway carriage, noted in his diary: "All Germans have red hair and are named Muller." The Psalmist said in his haste that all men are liars. I can not help thinking that Doctor Sprague said what he did about collectors in

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like haste and with less justification, because all men, except George Washington and Mark Twain, have lied at times, whereas I am confident that collectors, as a rule, are not mean and that the mean ones are the dishonorable exceptions.

But although I hold a brief for the defence, I intend to be fair. I am informed that no less a person than Doctor Thomas Addis Emmet himself—*clarum et venerabile nomen*—asserts that Sprague was well within the truth when he stigmatized collectors in the manner set forth in the Bell letter; that he was victimized right and left by people who never compensated him for material that he sold to them, and that he declared that Emmet and the late T. Bailey Myers were the only customers who paid him.

It must be remembered, however, that Doctor Sprague was not a dealer, a business man, with a tangible shop with a real, perceptible price-list. Perhaps the recipients of his autographic contributions thought that they were donees and not vendees. Diffident persons, strangers, might well hesitate about offering filthy lucre to a learned Doctor of Divinity, unless he does as merchants do and gives notice that he is in trade, by judicious advertisement.

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I doubt whether he mentioned prices or sent a bill, but if he expected payment he should have resorted to the ordinary methods of business.

Assuming that Doctor Sprague has testified that Emmet and Myers were the only persons who constitute the "honorable exceptions" referred to in the Bell letter, let us subject the complainant to such cross-examination as under our severe difficulties, we may resort to in aid of our clients. Doctor, did you ever know one Israel W. Tefft, of Georgia? Is it not a fact that when you visited him in 1830 he had only about thirty letters of Signers, but that he offered to give you such as you needed—and you took them? Did he not in 1845 present to you one or more Lynch signatures to enable you to complete your additional sets? If the Doctor's devoted admirer, Lyman C. Draper is telling the truth, the answers must be "yes." Now, I show you a letter in your unmistakable chirography, dated at Flushing, October 16, 1874, and call your attention to this language: "When I began to collect autographs, I was the intimate friend and correspondent of Robert Gilmour of your city, the first collector I ever knew, but it is long since his collection was sold and I suppose scattered

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to the winds." I will ask you now whether you were not mistaken in your statement to Doctor Emmet, and if the names of Tefft and of Gilmour — your "intimate friend" — should not be excluded from the category of "mean collectors," thus doubling the number of your "honorable exceptions?"

I think I will not call any witnesses, because I have none excepting myself. Truly, my own experience has led me to a conclusion quite different from that which the dear old Doctor announced so dogmatically. That experience, I admit, has not been extensive, but there has been a great change in autograph hunting since the Doctor's day and generation. Autograph collecting in this country was then in its infancy; the collecting of to-day bears a similar relation to that of fifty years ago that the telephone bears to the post or the Chicago Flyer to the deliberate trains on the old Camden and Amboy. It has been my good fortune to find the genuine collectors fair-minded, generous, and sympathetic, and I have often profited by their generosity. I hesitate to "name names" but perhaps I may be pardoned for mentioning the late Elliot Danforth, and also the scholarly Boston lawyer, Charles P. Greenough. Laurence Hutton too, was liberal

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and I am grateful to him, although I do not accept his peculiar views about autographs. As there is a "science falsely so-called," there are collectors who do not deserve the honorable name; and I am sure that if I could summon the shade of Sprague to this mortal sphere he would readily admit that his incautious assertion was the result of some temporary obscuration of the mind and that he did not really mean it.

MARTIN VAN BUREN THE LAWYER
Read before the New York State
Bar Association, 1905

MARTIN VAN BUREN, THE LAWYER

THE assembling of the lawyers of a State each year for the interchange of thought, the comparison of views, and the encouragement of fraternal feeling, derives its value not only from the consideration of legal problems and the study of legal principles, but also from the opportunity which it affords of perpetuating the memory of the founders of our bar. I believe that it is not foreign to the purposes of our Association to devote a portion of its time to the lawyers of the past; that it is not inappropriate to turn for a moment from the learned essays of whose worth and dignity we are all profoundly sensible in order to review by way of historical reminiscence the careers of those who adorned the first century of the jurisprudence of the State of New York. Such studies may not add materially to the sum of our knowledge, but they are useful in the promotion of the brotherly spirit and of the professional pride which every well constituted bar should possess and cherish.

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The name of Martin Van Buren has been obscured and his fame as a lawyer has been dimmed by the persistent injustice of posterity. Nothing is more unfair than the judgment of an indifferent public concerning a man who did not carry his success to a dramatic climax. The majority of us have no time to waste in the appreciation of men who have suffered defeat; and Van Buren, after a life of triumphs, was defeated at the end. The career which goes on from victory to victory, and terminates at the supreme moment—the career of such men as Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley—is secure and the decision of the world gives to them the crown of immortality. It was not the fortune of Van Buren to preserve his hold upon the imagination of succeeding generations.

Few men of the present comprehend the truth that Martin Van Buren was a great lawyer in the days when lawyers needed something more than a copy of the Code, Abbott's Forms, and the latest edition of White on Corporations to qualify them for successful practice; when it was not necessary to search through hundreds upon hundreds of volumes in order to ascertain in how many different ways the courts have decided the same question; but when original thought and creative genius

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were requisite for leadership in the battles of the bar. People think of him as a politician who was styled "The Kinderhook Fox" and "The Little Magician;" supposed to be cunning and devious in his methods; who, as they are inclined to believe, reached the highest place in the land by adroit manipulation and sedulous self-seeking. They regard him as one who was, in the vernacular, a skilful wire-puller; master of the arts by which the people are often deceived into promoting a charlatan, a trickster, and a shallow and plausible manager of men, to the loftiest positions in the commonwealth. The fallacy of this judgment has been admirably demonstrated by our fellow-lawyer, Edward M. Shepard, in his masterly biography of Van Buren which many competent critics regard as the best of the American Statesmen Series.

There is something almost ludicrous in the unfairness with which men treat political adversaries. One instance affords an example of the way in which reputations may be made and destroyed. Charles Francis Adams, candidate for Vice-President on the Free Soil ticket in 1848 with Van Buren at its head, was confronted with his printed assertions of 1844 that Van Buren made "a trade of public affairs."

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was "fixed to nothing" but his own interest, and that his "cold and temporizing policy" at that time was "symptomatic of treachery hereafter." Mr. Adams, frigid New Englander and utterly devoid of any sense of humor, was troubled greatly as he wrote gravely: "These opinions I then held but [Mr. Van Buren] has done much to make me change them. * * * Mr. Van Buren is a mixed character. In early life, right; in middle life swayed to the wrong by his ambition and his associations—he seems towards the close of his career to be again falling into the right channel." The test of right and wrong was whether or not he agreed with Charles Francis Adams. If it had not been for the accident of their agreement in 1848, the original judgment of Mr. Adams would have stood upon the record unreversed. It is a shallow observer who cannot see that in the life of Van Buren one unceasing purpose ran—to promote what he conscientiously believed to be for the best interests of his country. If he made errors—and there are few public men who do not make errors occasionally—they were honest errors. It is given to but few New Yorkers and to all New Englanders to be infallible.

But we are not concerned at present with

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Martin Van Buren, Senator of the United States, Governor, Secretary of State, Vice-President and President; we are dealing only with Martin Van Buren, counsellor at law, who was at twenty-six Surrogate of his County, at thirty a member of the highest appellate court of his State, at thirty-three Attorney General of New York; and until his election as Governor one of the busiest and most prosperous members of the bar. From 1828 until his death in 1862 he gave no time to the law. To him who looks upon a professional life as an ideal one, it may be permitted to regret that he bartered for the uncertain and illusive rewards of politics the glorious years which might have been given to the noble work of an able, independent, high-minded and conscientious advocate. Is the memory of the politician, often obscured by erroneous opinion, but lasting in a sense, better than the memory of the great lawyer? In later generations the fame of such men as George Wood, Charles O'Conor, William Curtis Noyes, and Nicholas Hill will surely be of no less value than that of the men who wandered from the law into the benighted regions of politics.

Of our twenty-five Presidents, all but five have been lawyers of more or less capacity,

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but it is safe to say that none of the lawyer-Presidents have been as eminent in the profession as Martin Van Buren and Benjamin Harrison. Both of these men were leaders at the bar in their respective States, and took part in the argument of great causes. Mr. Lincoln was a shrewd and successful trial lawyer before juries in what was in his time a comparatively undeveloped Western State, but his opportunities to demonstrate his effectiveness in the highest courts were not sufficient to enable him to prove his title to equality with his predecessor from New York or with his successor from Indiana. Pierce had a reputation in New Hampshire, Buchanan was honored in Pennsylvania, and Fillmore, Arthur and Cleveland were greatly respected in New York; but they achieved distinction in the sphere of politics rather than in the domain of the courts. The qualities which gain political preferment are not always those which win triumphs before the judges.

Van Buren was the son of a farmer of moderate means, and he had neither the benefits nor the disadvantages of a college education. When at fourteen he left the Kinderhook Academy, he began the study of the law with Francis Silvester, who is almost invariably

styled in sketches of Van Buren, as "a respectable lawyer of Kinderhook," and he was for one year a student in the New York office of William P. Van Ness, afterwards United States District Judge. Van Ness was only four years the senior of his student and, according to Hammond, the historian of early New York politics, he was "one of the most shrewd and sagacious men that the State of New York ever produced." I am not prepared to say that every lawyer should have a college training, but the conditions to-day are not the same as those of 1802. Colleges then were materially different from the colleges and universities of to-day. I doubt if Van Buren would have been any more or less successful if he had been a college man. As to a clerkship in an office in New York City, I am convinced that it helped him. We city men recognize the fact that the country lawyer is usually better founded in the principles than the busy men of the metropolis who are compelled to concern themselves more about the doing of a thing than about the technicalities of the performance. The magnates of finance in New York City care very little about the niceties of the law; they want to achieve results. In 1802 there was not so much differ-

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ence between the legal business of the city and that of the country; but yet I think the year's work in New York was of advantage to Van Buren, although he says himself that Van Ness did not have much business.

There must always be a legend connected with the youth of a distinguished lawyer, and there is one about Van Buren which the solemn Mr. Holland relates in the "Life" published in 1835. It is said that "the young advocate, not yet sixteen years of age, successfully managed a cause of great interest and considerable importance against an opponent who was then in full practice at the bar, and has since filled several responsible public offices. The future statesman was then so small of stature that he was placed upon a table to address the jury." By the time the tale reaches the year 1888, Mr. Shepard makes the opponent none other than Silvester himself, and the justice has the lad stand upon a bench, with the exhortation, "There, Mat, beat your master." I have serious doubts whether, even in that generation, small boys in law offices were allowed to try important causes against the lawyer with whom they were serving.

In the Congressional Library at Washington

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ton, where the papers of many of our Presidents repose, may be found the manuscript autobiography which Mr. Van Buren began to prepare in his seventy-third year and which, like many such works, was never completed. It has not been published, but I am informed that it is to be printed under the auspices of Mr. Worthington C. Ford, the efficient chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library. Most of the pages are devoted to politics, for the author remarks that the briefest sketch of the incidents of his professional life would occupy too much space and that "they must, with one or two exceptions, be left to the judicial reports and to the traditions of the times." He tells us however a number of incidents connected with the lawyers of the day and with his early life which make us regret that he did not dwell more fully upon his experiences as a lawyer, and I am tempted to indulge in a few quotations. Although the story of his boyish triumphs may be apochryphal, there is no doubt that he was precocious. In the autobiography, after deplored his devotion to light reading instead of to the graver studies, he says: "In place of the studies by which I would thus have given employment to an uncommonly active mind, I

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adopted at a very early age the practice of appearing as counsel before arbitrators and inferior tribunals, and my success was such as to give rise to exaggerated impressions that were brought before the public in the course of my after political career." He adds, later on: "I cannot pass from the subject of my early professional career in inferior tribunals without a caution to my young friends, the circumstances of whose start in life may resemble my own, against the adoption of a similar course. The temptation to anticipate professional fame is a strong one, and my success, humble as it has been, is well calculated to mislead young men of genius and ambition. Whatever the degree of that success may have been, they may be assured that it would have been much greater and more substantial if like many others who may not have succeeded as well, I had first acquired a sound education and stored my mind with useful knowledge." This is rather an amusing bit of self-appreciation disguised as self-depreciation.

He was licensed as an attorney in November, 1803, and opened an office in his native village in association with his half-brother, James I. Van Alen. At the next term of the county courts he was admitted as attorney and

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counsellor, and in February 1807 he reached the ultimate stage of professional standing, the office of Counsellor in the Supreme Court. In those days they were fond of fine distinctions in the grades of lawyers; they had not learned that the lawyer finds his level by the force of his intellect rather than by the title which he bears. In 1808 he was appointed Surrogate of Columbia County and served until 1813. In 1809 he removed to Hudson and became a partner of Cornelius Miller, the father of Judge Theodore Miller whom most of us remember as a Judge of the Court of Appeals. It is perhaps almost undignified to refer to the fact that Van Buren and Miller did what is called a "paying business." It is very pleasant to think of our profession only in its loftier aspects, but we cannot deny that there is a financial element about it which is not devoid of serious interest. The question of pay cannot be overlooked; and it is no mean test of the ability of the men who try and argue causes, this test of the sums which clients are willing to pay for their services. At the age of forty-six he was compelled by the exigencies of public life to relinquish private practice. He had amassed what was at that time a comfortable fortune, acquired by

faithful and distinguished professional labor.

In the autobiography, he sums up his legal life thus: "For my business I was to a marked extent indebted to the public at large, having received but little from the mercantile interest or from corporations, and none from the great landed aristocracies of the country. It was notwithstanding fully equal to my desires and far beyond my most sanguine expectations. I was not worth a shilling when I commenced my professional career. I have never since owed a debt that I could not pay on demand nor known what it is to be without money, and I retired from the practice of my profession with means adequate to my own support and to leave to my children not large estates but as much as I think it for their advantage to receive. The cases in which I was employed embraced not only the ordinary subjects of litigation between man and man in communities like that in which I resided, but extended to the most intricate and important cases that arose during the last fifteen or twenty years of my practice. In the management of these I was repeatedly associated with and opposed to such men as Richard Harrison, Aaron Burr, Thomas Addis Emmet, Daniel Webster, John Wells, John V. Henry, Peter Van Schaack,

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Abraham Van Vechten, David B. Ogden, Samuel A. Talcott, and Elisha Williams—a galaxy of great lawyers scarcely equalled in the professional ranks of any country."

The bar of Columbia County has always been conspicuous for ability, but it was unusually brilliant in the early days of the nineteenth century. Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer, Ambrose Spencer, Thomas P. Grosvenor, William W. Van Ness—who must not be confounded with Van Buren's preceptor—and Elisha Williams made it famous all over the State, and indeed among lawyers all over the country. Those who have a liking for the stories of the lives of lawyers will find its history well told in the privately printed book of Peyton L. Miller—the grandson of Van Buren's partner, Cornelius Miller—entitled "A Group of Great Lawyers of Columbia County, New York," printed in the neat and attractive style of the De Vinne Press. There you may read of Van Buren, of Tilden, of the Livingstons, of the Spencers; of the multitudinous Van Nesses and Vanderpoels; and of the mighty Williams. The tradition of Williams still survives. Raymond, the biographer, who wrote more than fifty years ago, says that after Van Ness was made a Judge of

the Supreme Court in 1807, Van Buren was employed in the trial of almost every important cause that was tried in Columbia County until he removed to Albany, and generally opposed to Williams. Van Buren was a plebeian, a Democrat; Williams, an aristocrat and a Federalist. Emmons, who wrote a futile sort of sketch of Van Buren in 1835, says that from 1809 the two men divided, and for many years continued to divide, the professional business of the county. He adds: "The writer has often witnessed, in other places, displays of great forensic talent; but he has never seen causes tried with anything like the zeal, the skill, or the effect, which was always exhibited at a Columbia circuit during the period referred to." Williams was witty, sarcastic and eloquent; Van Buren was ingenious, persuasive and argumentative. When the two men were pitted against each other before juries they were greeted by crowded audiences. To-day, no crowds assemble to applaud contending counsel, unless the cause is scandalous and sensational in its nature. When I went to the London Law Courts a few years ago and asked the solemn attendant to be shown to some court-room, he assured me that there was nothing going on which would interest me.

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because there were no divorce cases on trial. He had unconsciously gauged the popular standard of preference.

Williams was a tall, handsome and imposing person, nearly ten years older than his adversary, while Van Buren was small, and although not insignificant in stature, yet not impressive. He had none of those physical qualities which often carry weight with jurymen. To our modern eyes he would have been almost amusing if the description which Henry B. Stanton gives of him as he was in 1828 is accurate. "Mr. Van Buren," says Stanton in his *Random Recollections*, "was rather an exquisite in appearance. His complexion was a bright blond and he dressed accordingly. On this occasion he wore an elegant snuff-colored broadcloth coat with a velvet collar; his cravat was orange with modest lace tips; his vest was of a pearl hue; his trousers were white duck; his shoes were morocco; his neatly fitting gloves were yellow kid; his long-furred beaver hat with broad brim was of a Quaker color."

It is difficult to imagine our leaders of to-day arrayed in such a fashion. I can fancy that if any of these eminent counsel should appear thus clad in the stately room where sits our Court of Appeals, its dignified Clerk would

fall in speechless syncope and the black-gowned judges would disappear through that mysterious back door which always arouses my curiosity.

Oliver Wendell Holmes once asked Gulian C. Verplanck who, on the whole, seemed the most considerable person he ever met, and Verplanck answered "Elisha Williams." He was a worthy foe. The best comparison of the two men was drawn by Benjamin Franklin Butler, the partner of Van Buren from his admission to the bar until 1828 and a student in the office of Van Buren & Miller, a member of the cabinet of Jackson and of Van Buren, and Van Buren's most intimate friend. "Never," said Butler, "were two men more dissimilar. Both were eloquent, but the eloquence of Williams was declamatory and exciting; that of Van Buren insinuating and delightful. Williams had the livelier imagination; Van Buren the sounder judgment. The former presented the strong points of his case in bolder relief, invested them in a more brilliant coloring, indulged a more unlicensed and magnificent invective, and gave more life and variety to his arguments by his peculiar wit and inimitable humor; but Van Buren was his superior in analyzing, arranging and combining the in-

sulated materials, in comparing and weighing testimony, in unravelling the web of intricate affairs, in eviscerating truth from the mass of diversified and conflicting evidence, in softening the heart and moulding it to his purpose, and in working into the judgments of his hearers the conclusions of his own perspicuous and persuasive reasoning." There is an ancient story which expresses the truth more concisely than the stately, old-fashioned phrases of the great Reviser. Williams is reported as saying tersely of his rival: "I get all the verdicts and you get all the judgments." To those who remember the naive remark of the British juryman that Sir James Scarlett always won his cases because he was always on the right side, this observation of Williams has its significance. But it brings to my mind the story which William Allen Butler was fond of telling about the Irishman who was present in the court of Judge Bosworth, and who said to the lawyer "Ye may say what ye please, but there's an old, white-headed chap up there who gets more verdicts than any of yees." Williams had his way with the juries, but in the end the judges determined the controversy.

Van Buren himself says of Williams: "I invariably encountered him with more appre-

hension at the circuits than any of the great men I have named, and I am sure I speak but the opinion of his professional contemporaries when I say that he was the greatest *nisi prius* lawyer of the New York bar. * * * It seemed scarcely possible to excel his skill in the examination of witnesses or of his addresses to the jury, but with these his ambition seemed satisfied; for arguments at the Term he was seldom well prepared and far less successful."

Do you ever take down from the shelves the dingy volumes of Johnson or of Cowen, whose wretched law-calf binding comes off on your hands and your coat, and skim through the contents for the mere pleasure of it? It is like the study of the mastodon by the palaeontologist. If a man cites Johnson or Cowen now-a-days, his adversary is adamant and the judges talk among themselves about something contemporaneous. You might as well quote the Year Books, or refer to East or Hobart or Plowden. But there is in all the old reports abundant material for delightful study. It may be that they are not what might be styled "light literature," but they are infinitely more suggestive, more stimulating to the imagination, and indeed more instructive than the one

hundred and odd volumes of New York Reports, or the latest volume of the Federal Reporter. You cannot fail to discover that there were giants in those days—giants at the bar and on the bench—and you may measure their stature. In those historic days, briefs were not prepared by clerks or opinions dictated to stenographers; counsel were not held down to hours or minutes; judges did not move uneasily in their seats and throw aside the records as a signal for the termination of an argument too prolix. The highest energies of the courts were not devoted to the question whether or not the cause was technically before them, and matters of large importance were accorded the full measure of consideration, as when the Court of Appeals gave an entire term to the case of *Curtis v. Leavitt* which involved \$1,500,000 and devoted two hundred and ninety-seven pages of the 15th N. Y. to the statement and the opinions. I do not mean to be understood as presuming to utter a word of criticism upon our courts of to-day or upon counsel of the present. The whole country and its business have grown so enormously that speed has come to be a necessity. The volume of litigation, the magnitude of amounts, has continually increased, but the day is still

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but twenty-four hours long and it cannot be made longer by legislatures or even by Congress, notwithstanding the Interstate Commerce clause of the Federal Constitution. If the stately and solemn lawyers or the grave and deliberate judges of the olden time could be brought in contact with the conditions of the present, they would gasp with breathless amazement, fly to their libraries, and perish from intellectual apoplexy.

An examination of the books reveals the fact that Van Buren's name—it is spelled there "Van Beuren"—first appears in 3d Johnson, 174, where on behalf of the defendant he moved for a new trial in the case of *Wilson and Gibbs v. Reed*. It was an action of trover about a hogshead of rum, and the amount involved was eighty dollars. The plaintiff had a verdict, and the motion came on to be heard at the May Term of the Supreme Court in 1808, Elisha Williams and Mr. Kirtland opposing. Van Buren was beaten, the court (*per* Spencer J.) saying that "the defendant must take nothing by his motion." In the next case the young advocate was more fortunate. It was an action of ejectment (*Jackson ex. dem. Whitlock v. Deyo*, 3 Johns. 421). In those times the courts were almost as full of eject-

ment suits as they now are of suits to recover damages for personal injuries, those obstructers of the calendars and encouragers of fraud, perjury, champerty, and maintenance. The progress of the ages seems to make the world wither and the individual more and more, so that disputes about land have practically disappeared, and questions about personal injuries appear to have supplanted them, not to the benefit of the bar. We have become divided between real lawyers and ambulance lawyers. It is difficult to imagine Hoffman, Radcliff, Van Vechten, Van Buren, Livingston, Cady and Jordan contending over problems of contributory negligence and the vagaries of guards and motor-men. Returning to the Deyo case, the plaintiff had a verdict and Elisha Williams came forward to ask for a new trial. Van Buren, for plaintiff, was "stopped by the court." Williams was annihilated on the spot, the court holding that an equitable title cannot be set up in ejectment against the legal title. In the same volume (3d Johnson, 498) Van Buren appears again, (November Term, 1808) in another ejectment suit, *Jackson ex. dem. Van Deusen vs. Scissam*, and on this occasion Williams was with him. They moved for a new trial and had the vic-

tory. So at twenty-six, Van Buren was already arguing cases in the Supreme Court and was either with the famous Williams or against him. Evidently he had made his mark, and friends and neighbors, whose judgment is usually sound, estimated him at his true worth.

I do not find that he came before the Court of Errors until the argument of *Trice v. Jackson*, 8 Johnson, 496, where he was associated with Van Vechten, whom he afterwards succeeded in the office of Attorney-General, against Mr. Sudam and Williams, and he was defeated. This is one of the three cases in error in that volume, so few were the appeals to the highest court. He was of counsel for John V. N. Yates, in the famous case of *Yates vs. Lansing*, 9th Johnson, 396, with Thomas Addis Emmet as an associate and John V. Henry and Van Vechten as opponents. It was the most important of the six "Cases in Error" reported in that volume. The mention of Henry reminds me of an autograph letter of Van Buren to him, dated in 1821, which has no particular interest except that it shows the easy way in which they practiced in those days. It is before me now. Van Buren says: "I find on examining the bill of exceptions in our—cause [I cannot decipher the name—he wrote abominably],

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that I have omitted the statement by you of the deeds contained in the exception, an omission which leaves the case imperfect and may embarrass both of us. I send you my notes to show that the amendment I send for your approbation is correct, and you will find it so by a reference to yours. Be so good as to look at it this evening and authorize my clerk to alter the bill conformable to it. Your friend, M. V. Buren." He generally signed "V. Buren" abbreviating the "Van." It must have been more comfortable to practice law in those days than it is now, for we do not make up or amend our records in such a carelessly amicable way.

He asserts that he was extremely unwilling to accept political office, but circumstances compelled him to become a candidate. In November, 1812, he took his seat as Senator from the Middle District and thus became a member of the Court for the Correction of Errors and Trial of Impeachments, that odd tribunal composed of the Chancellor, the Judges of the Supreme Court, the Lieutenant-Governor, and the thirty-two Senators, of which might be said what has been said of the Court of Errors and Appeals of New Jersey, that it was too large for a court and too small for a

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town-meeting. His first opinion was given in *Barry vs. Mandell*, 10th Johnson, 563, decided in March, 1813. This is the famous cow-escape case which fills nineteen pages of the fine print of my edition of Johnson, and to which not only Van Buren but Chancellor Lansing gave the most laborious investigation. I doubt if our Court of Appeals would have accorded to it more than a few scanty lines in the Memoranda at the end of a volume.

Mr. Shepard gives an account of this case which for succinct statement and dignified humor is not to be equalled, and I shall not attempt to paraphrase it. An unfortunate debtor was released from imprisonment for debt on a bond to keep within the jail liberties. He was personally conducting a certain cow, which animal, after the manner of cows ever since the flood, jumped about unwarrantably and from time to time dragged its unhappy conductor four, six or ten feet outside of the limits. On the theory that each cow-compelled excursion constituted an escape, the creditor sued the sureties on the bond. The Supreme Court, Kent presiding, sustained the recovery. Van Buren did not like the Federalist Kent, and he had a grim delight in punishing that luminary of the law. Moreover he had the

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modern view of the absurd policy of imprisoning men for failure to pay simple contract debts. The decision of the Supreme Court was reversed, and the young Senator filed an opinion far more elaborate than that of Chancellor Lansing with whom he concurred. As Shepard says it "could not have been more carefully done had something greater seemed at stake than a bovine vagary and a few dollars." A portion at least of this opinion will bear quotation. Van Buren had his ear close to the ground for popular sympathy, and he proved his breadth of mind and his appreciation of the common feelings of mankind. Although it is a legal opinion, it is a fair example of what Mr. Shepard once described to me as his "political-partisan style, one of the best styles practiced by statesmen." Van Buren said:

"Permit me next, respectfully, to examine with what propriety it can be alleged, that escapes of this description are so far against the policy of the statute, as to render the construction of the court below proper and necessary. As it has truly been remarked, 'this statute was passed for humane purposes;' it was among the first concessions which were made by that inflexible spirit, which has hitherto maintained its hold on society, authoriz-

ing imprisonment for debt. Coeval with the authority of imprisonment for debt have been the exertions of men of intelligence, of reflection and philanthropy, to mitigate its rigor; of men who viewed it as a practice fundamentally wrong, a practice which forces their fellow creatures from society, from their friends and their agonized families into the dreary walls of a prison; which compels them to leave all those fascinating endearments, to become an inmate with vermin; which confines them within the same walls that contain the midnight incendiary and the ruthless assassin; not for crimes which they have committed; not for frauds which they have practiced on the credulous and unwary; (for such distinctions are not made;) but for the misfortune of being poor; of being unable to satisfy the all-digesting stomach of some ravenous creditor; of men who looked upon the practice as confounding virtue and vice, and destroying the distinction between guilt and innocence, which should unceasingly be cherished in any well regulated government."

After eloquence like this Barry's cow should be as immortal as the Chicago cow of Mrs. O'Leary. But it was a wise utterance for a rising politician, and the general sentiment of

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succeeding days has approved the judgment.

I have said that he disliked Kent: he certainly took a sly pleasure in tormenting the distinguished Chief Justice and Chancellor, but in the autobiography he bestows upon him the most exalted praise. He tells one or two stories of Kent which are new, at least to me, and which exhibit the Chancellor in a new light. Van Buren was calling upon him one day, and found a young man applying for admission as a Solicitor in Chancery who was manifestly not "within the rules," but who cited the case of another applicant who had recently been admitted. "I deny it, sir!" cried the Chancellor. "It is not true. I did not *admit* him. He *broke* in!" On another occasion, says Van Buren, "he displayed in my presence what in almost any other man would have been regarded as undignified violence of temper and manner, but would not, to one who knew him well, bear any such construction. The reversals of the preceding day having been referred to, he broke out in a mock tirade against the judges, to the following effect: 'They are unfit for their places, Mr. Van Buren, you know that they are! Spencer and Van Ness are able enough, but instead of studying their cases they devote their time to politics. You know that

as well as I do! As to Judge Yates'—raising his hands—'I need say nothing. You should *roll* him back to Schenectady!'—(an allusion to Judge Yates' personal appearance, borrowed from Mr. Clinton)—'and as to my cousin Platt! He is only fit to be head deacon to a Presbyterian church and for nothing else!'" If this is Mr. Van Buren's idea of pleasant jocosity, I wonder what he would regard as rather bitter personal abuse. I have never had the honor of knowing any judge who keenly enjoyed reversals of his own decisions.

The next case in which Van Buren delivered an opinion was the celebrated one of *Ambrose Spencer vs. Solomon Southwick* (10 Johnson, 259). Southwick, who was a sort of Thomas W. Lawson in the politics of the period, had publicly accused Spencer of misconduct as a Senator in putting through the famous charter of the Manhattan Company—still enduring as one of our great financial institutions, but not the only corporation which has in its inception aimed to supply the public with pure water. He charged Spencer, one of the most eminent men of his day, with having by hypocrisy and deceit procured the passage of the act of incorporation at a time when he was pecuniarily interested in the enterprise. Spencer filed a

replication, setting up the fact that he was not so interested and Southwick demurred. The demurrer was sustained in the Supreme Court, but the decision was reversed, by an unanimous vote, Van Buren writing for reversal. In *Graves v. Dash*, 12 Johnson, 17, he made a few remarks, but the majority was against him.

We look at these old opinions and the abstracts of the arguments of counsel, and we are apt to think that in those ancient times lawyers were far more learned and courts far more astute than they are in this twentieth century. It may be so as far as the lawyers are concerned, but we must not forget that men used to lead what is now called "a simple life" and that the complexities of this generation were wholly unknown in those halcyon days. The manifold complications of this generation would have bewildered the lawyers of the olden times. The subtle questions which agitated our courts a century ago have long since been relegated to obscurity. Our courts must needs deal with modern problems, and they endeavor to decide them according to their view of what is right—often, however, if I may be permitted to express an humble opinion, giving their judgment in favor of what they happen to think is right in the particular case

before them, rather than with regard to rule and precedent. Many years ago I was closely associated with a venerable judge who once occupied a place on the bench of our highest court, and I remember that he told me seriously that "the Court of Appeals never decides a case except as it wishes to decide it." I have had frequent occasion since then to admit that he told the truth; and I have often wished that there had been more cordial unanimity of sentiment between us on the subject before them. At the same time, I believe that in character, capacity and intelligence the bench of our own day and of our own State compares favorably with that of any time or of any country. If experience brings to a man the capacity to be fair and just, it must convince him that it is a sad mistake to censure the judges whose views differ from his own.

In February, 1815, Van Buren was chosen the successor of the distinguished Abraham Van Vechten as Attorney-General—an office which was considered to be of such eminence and importance that only lawyers of the greatest reputation were selected to fill it. Van Buren won the place by the casting vote of Governor Tompkins, against the influence of Ambrose Spencer who was beginning to think

that his young friend was becoming too powerful. He held the office until July, 1819, when he was removed by a combination of Clintonians and Federalists. The salary of the Attorney-General was then \$5.50 a day, with some costs. Although he continued to serve as State Senator until 1820 he delivered few judicial opinions while he was Attorney-General. Removing to Albany in 1816, he took in partnership with him his pupil, Butler: and after his senior's election to the United States Senate in 1821 Butler undoubtedly bore the burden of the business, although Van Buren appeared now and then in the Court of Errors.

He did not confine his attention to courts of law, but frequently appeared before the Chancellor. The fourth volume of Johnson's Chancery Reports contains seven of his cases, in six of which he was successful. One of these cases (*Troup vs. Rice*, 4th Johns. Ch., 228), Charles Butler said that it was opened by Van Buren for the complainants "with a speech surpassing anything perhaps ever delivered by him."

It would be tedious to enumerate the various litigations in which he was concerned; but there are two reported cases which show him at his best, both arising out of the celebrated

Medcef Eden controversy,—*Wilkes vs. Lion*, 2 Cowen, 333, argued in December, 1823, and *Varick vs. Jackson*, 2 Wendell, 166, argued in December, 1828. The reporters give his arguments quite at length,—seventeen pages being devoted to his presentation of the first case and twenty-three pages in the second case. He had against him in 1823, Samuel Jones and Samuel A. Talcott, and in 1828, Boyd and Van Vechten. His associate was Aaron Burr; in fact it was Burr's own case. Eden was a brewer in New York and when he died in 1798 he left to his two sons a large amount of real estate on Manhattan Island. If either died childless, the other was to inherit the share of the deceased son. They squandered their property and lost their lands. Questions were raised about the validity of the transactions, and Hamilton and Burr were consulted, Hamilton being of the opinion that the estate could not be recovered and Burr advising to the contrary. Hamilton's views prevailed, but when Burr returned from Europe with no money and no practice, his attention was drawn to the matter by the death of one of the sons. He took up the case and made it his chief business. The story is graphically told by Parton in his "Life of Aaron

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Burr," but it is too long to be given here. There was no more astute real property lawyer than Aaron Burr, and if he had devoted himself to his profession instead of to the gods of politics, he might have been enshrined among the heroes whom we love to honor. He was shrewd enough to know that he must remain well hidden in the background and must put forward some influential personage as the leader. He chose Van Buren, whose enemies were always fond of comparing him to Burr. The bitter old diarist, John Quincy Adams, said of Van Buren and Burr: "There is much resemblance of character, manners and even person, between the two men." Be that as it may, Burr chose Van Buren as counsel and their efforts were crowned with a triumph. How Burr tactfully subordinated himself may be seen by the reports. In *Wilkes vs. Lion*, he merely said that "he should add but little on the three first points of the defence; the ability with which all the points had been examined by his associate forbade his saying much in relation to either;" and in *Varick vs. Jackson* he declined to argue the principal question, making only a few remarks about the examination of a witness. At this day, when the sums involved are so great, it is

amusing to recall the remarks of Kent about this case: "This may well be considered," said the commentator, "a grave and important question, demanding the utmost care and attention on the part of the court; for it was said on the argument that property to the amount of *half a million dollars* depended upon the decision to be made in this case."

His latest appearance before juries was in the trial of the Astor case in which he was associated with Kent and with Daniel Webster, and of the Sailor's Snug Harbor case in the fall of 1827. It was in the course of the last mentioned trial that the great Thomas Addis Emmet had the fatal stroke which ended his life and Van Buren gives a vivid description of the event in the Autobiography. He says: "I was one of the opposing counsel in the cause, and as the court adjourned on the preceding day he expressed to me his surprise that we had kept our suit, the claim of Bishop Inglis of Nova Scotia to the immense estate called the Sailor's Snug Harbor, on foot so long; but added that we could not prolong its life beyond twelve o'clock of the next day. When that time arrived, I followed him from the bar to the stove, whither he had been called by an acquaintance, and said: 'Well,

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Mr. Emmet, the hour has come, and we are alive yet!' 'Yes,' he answered, 'but you cannot live much longer!' Immediately after my return to my seat, David B. Ogden said to me: 'Look at Emmet! He is going to have a fit!' I looked and replied that it was a mistake. In a few minutes he repeated the alarm more emphatically. I went to Chief Justice Thompson, before whom the cause was tried, and informed him of Mr. Ogden's suspicions. The Judge observed Mr. Emmet closely and replied pleasantly: 'No, no! Ogden is mistaken, his underlip hangs a little lower than usual, but that is natural to him when he is writing.' At that instant, and as I turned towards my seat, I saw Mr. Emmet reel in his chair, and extend his hand towards a neighboring pillar. I endeavored to intercept his fall, but without success; he was carried to his house, and died in a few hours."

While a Senator of the United States, he had a narrow escape from occupying a seat on the bench of the United States Supreme Court. He tells us that Smith Thompson, Secretary of the Navy, asked him if he would accept an appointment to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Brockholst Livingston. Rufus King advised him to take the place. Van Buren had

had a difference with President Monroe about the postmastership of Albany, but said that if the President was disposed to confer the office upon him, he would accept it, although he had no desire for the position and could not consent to be regarded as an applicant for it. Something seems to have interfered with the proposed arrangement and Thompson was appointed to the office; and Van Buren says "he was as eminently qualified for it as he was unfit for political life."

In dealing with Van Buren as a lawyer, it is not easy to refrain from quoting the words of Mr. Shepard. "Van Buren's work as a lawyer," he says, "brought him something besides wealth and the education and refinement of books, and something which neither Erskine nor Webster gained. The profession afforded him an admirable discipline in the conduct of affairs; and affairs, in law as out of it, are largely decided by human nature and its varying peculiarities. The preparation of details; the keen and far-sighted arrangement of the best, because the most practicable plan; the refusal to fire off ammunition for the popular applause to be roused by its noise and flame; the clear, steady bearing in mind of the end to be accomplished, rather than the prolonged

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enjoyment or systematic working out of intermediate processes beyond a utilitarian necessity—all these elements Van Buren mastered in a signal degree, and made invaluable in legal practice." It is said of him that he was not an orator, but he persuaded men. They thought much more then of what may be called "fine speaking" than we do, and Van Buren was not of the order of speakers who arouse the tears and applause of jurymen and spectators; but he was effective and he had the art which made the British juryman disparage Scarlett in comparison with Brougham. We have only tradition to tell us of his exploits in the trial courts, for none of his addresses to juries were ever reported.

It was said of him that whether before a jury or the court in *banc* he particularly excelled in the opening of his subject. The facts out of which the questions for discussion arose and the mode in which he intended to treat them were always stated with great clearness and address. Undoubtedly this careful lucidity of statement was a great factor in his power. We all know that the statement of facts is usually the most important part of any argument and that causes are won oftener on the "statement" than on the marshalling of authorities,

mainly perhaps because the judges generally know more law than we do but not so much about the facts of our case. William Allen Butler preferred to argue for the appellant because it gave him the first chance at the facts, always an advantage as he learned from his distinguished father who was so unfortunate as to bear the same name as a certain Massachusetts general. If we may judge by his political writings, Van Buren was elaborate and copious. I have read the autobiography, and it is a monument of diffuseness. He could speak well without much previous study, but he was exceedingly laborious and industrious, mindful of the value of careful preparation. In the "Life and Letters" of Mr. Charles Butler, who was a clerk in the office of Van Buren and Butler, it is recorded that on the first morning of his clerkship "being minded to despatch work he rose at half-past four and at five in came Mr. Van Buren himself, ready for the business of the day." In a letter written at the time, Mr. Butler says: "I rise early, and what is more provoking, Mr. Van Buren some mornings back has risen at half-past four. I rise at five and find him up. This morning he rode five or seven miles before seven o'clock. I can't imagine what pos-

seses him." He owned what in those days was an excellent library, and he used it systematically. "In the stillness of the night," says the ornate Mr. Holland, in the inflated manner of his time, "he buried his whole soul in the researches of science. At that propitious season, he knelt at the shrine of that 'jealous mistress which allows no rival,' and communed with those eloquent oracles of enlightened reason, which are too often allowed to repose in silence on the dusty shelf." All this means that he worked at night; but as Shepard says, he learned men quite as fast as he learned books. On the whole he seems according to those who knew him well, to have been fluent and facile; felicitous in expounding the intricacies of fact and law; mild, insinuating, never declamatory; going to the pith of the subject without the arts of rhetoric. Referring to his own mental habits, he relates in the autobiography that John Randolph, in one of his morbid moods, wrote a series of letters to Andrew Jackson, in which he attacked Van Buren. "These," he says, "General Jackson as was his habit in regard to all private letters designed to sow tares between us, sent to me for my perusal." Randolph said in one letter "that in his long experience of public life he

had scarcely ever met with a single prominent man less informed than myself upon great questions when they were first presented, or who understood them better when I came to their discussion. I remember well the General's hearty laugh when he heard me subscribe to the justice of the description."

Many are the tales which are told of his imperturbable demeanor, his adroitness of speech, and his amusing non-committalism. Philip Hone, who was his bitter opponent, says in his Diary, referring to the stormiest period of Van Buren's administration, "his outward appearance is like the unruffled surface of the majestic river which covers rocks and whirlpools, but shows no marks of the agitation beneath." John Quincy Adams writes of him that like the Sosie of Moliere's Amphitryon, he was *l'ami de tout le monde*. Adams tells us that Henry Clay, at a reception in the White House, congratulated Van Buren upon his happiness in being surrounded by so many of his friends, to which he answered "the weather is very fine." "No insignificant answer," says Adams, "for it implied his conscious assent to the satirical reflection implied in Clay's remark—fair weather friends." It is told of him that on a canal-boat journey a political

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opponent wagered a basket of wine that no question could be asked of him to which he would give a direct answer, and when the taker propounded to his chief the query "does the sun rise in the east or in the west?" Mr. Van Buren began his reply with the characteristic preface: "the terms 'east' and 'west' are conventional," whereupon his disheartened admirer exclaimed "I've lost the bet." In all this we may discern only the habitual caution of the experienced lawyer, sensible of the danger which lurks in loose and unreflecting assertion. He was always angry at the accusation of non-committalism, calling it contemptuously a "party catch-word."

The absorbing work of the politician took Van Buren from the bar all too soon. After 1828, he belonged to the nation. As Holland says, "for some years preceding his final withdrawal from the bar, his practice, it is believed, was unsurpassed in its extent and responsibility by that of any lawyer in his native State and perhaps in the United States." I am loath to leave him—a notable character, unjustly decried by ill-informed or partisan historians. There is no doubt that he deliberately sacrificed his chances for the Presidential nomination in 1844 by his letter against the

annexation of Texas, "one of the finest and bravest pieces of political courage" as Shepard well says, and one which "deserves from Americans a long admiration." He was never non-committal about the essentials.

In the early days of the rebellion, he was patriotic and staunchly devoted to the cause of the Union, although sometimes unjustly accused of sympathy with secession. When his will was opened they found that it began in these words: "I, Martin Van Buren, of the Town of Kinderhook, County of Columbia, and State of New York, heretofore Governor of the State and more recently President of the United States, but for the last and happiest years of my life a farmer in my native town, do make and declare the following to be my last will and testament." And so, at the end, after an active career of sixty years, during which he had attained the highest rank in his profession and the most exalted office in the nation, he gave his testimony to the emptiness of honors and the worthlessness of political rewards, and "his dust returned to the earth as it was, his spirit to the God who gave it."

THE SOCIETY FOR THE
PROMOTION OF THE PUBLIC GOOD

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Some Remarks at a Dinner of The Netherlands Society of Philadelphia, January 23rd, 1906.

Mr. Chairman and Fellow-Dutchmen:

WHEN a timid person is suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to address his helpless fellow beings after they have enjoyed a bountiful repast and have indulged in libations calculated to make them ready to swallow anything which the post-prandial orator may see fit to ladle out to them, and while he is trying, with more or less success, to conceal his manuscript in his pocket, he is accustomed to say that he does not know why he has been requested to perform. But really, and without any undue humility, I confess that I do not know why an obscure individual like myself; only a poor lawyer, who never played "bridge" and never owned an automobile; who has

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never been indicted for anything yet; should be asked to address an assemblage of magnates like you; such a bevy of brains and beauty; such a magnificent array of iridescent intellect and personal pulchritude. Far be it from me to account for it on the score of family influence on the Dinner Committee. But, however it may be, I am very proud of the chance to behold you in the performance of what I suppose to be the principal work of your society, and to see you, in the words of the poet—

"Tho' deep, yet clear; tho' gentle, yet not dull.
Strong without rage; without o'erflowing—full."

May it be, perhaps, that however unworthy I am to represent so great a constituency, I am here as a delegate from the capital of the colony of the New Netherlands—pre-eminently the home of the Dutch, whatever you may choose to say or to sing about "the Jersey Dutch, the Delaware Dutch and the Dutch of Pennsylvania;" from the humble little hamlet built at the mouth of the Hudson, called New Amsterdam, nobly Dutch in a time when Pennsylvania was hopelessly given over to Quakers and the rule of the Penn, which we are credibly informed is mightier than the sword; on that island of Manna-hatta, rescued

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from the aborigines by the aid of Mynheer Ten Broeck's multitudinous nether garments which that bulbous-bottomed burgher peeling like an onion, devoted to the good cause in the operations of the first recorded American land-syndicate to which Ten Broeck contributed the breeches and Oloff Van Kortlandt the brains—while the Indians represented the confiding public.

New Amsterdam has passed from the rule of sturdy hard-koppig Peter Stuyvesant and his wooden leg to the rule of the Boss with his wooden head; but there are some of the descendants of the old stock who still remain and who perpetuate the name and the glories of good St. Nicholas. And while I have no lawful title to speak for them, yet by virtue of my ancestry—Jersey Dutch, it is true, on one side but New Amsterdam Dutch on the other—I may at least on behalf of the New Amsterdammers congratulate you on your prosperity and extend to you our cordial and fraternal greeting. In order to give myself local color I stood this morning for half an hour on Wall street near William, with my gable-end to the street. I would have produced the badge and the long clay pipe of the St. Nicholas Society as my credentials but at the last dinner I lost

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the one and broke the other in schnapps-inspired enthusiasm. I would have submitted to you the doughnut, the kruller, and the oily koek, the symbols of Dutch good cheer, but nobody has made them for me since the days of my grandmother Hoffman. So I must ask you to receive me on trust, and to let me on behalf of your allies on the other side of the Hudson, wish you all long life and happiness; a never-ending series of dinners like this, where men of kindred blood and kindred feelings may come together to give to one another the grasp of the hand and the word of the heart which tell us that we are brothers—united by ties not only of ancestry but of common aims, of common hopes, and of common aspirations.

To tell the truth, I do not care so much about history. You remember that Disraeli said about his wife that she was an excellent creature, but she never could remember which came first, the Greeks or the Romans. Really it doesn't matter much to us whether the Dutch came first or the French, or the English. Like the celebrated wingless insect, renowned in song, they got there just the same. An Italian discovered us originally, and the Italians have been discovering us ever

since. Columbus came on a Spanish ship, and the Spanish discovered us in 1898; and they gave us a Philopoena present that a good many of us would be glad to return if we could. But whether we are Netherlanders or Quakers, Dutchmen or Dagoes, Saxon or Norman or Dane, we are all of us Americans first, the rest afterwards. That you may say is a commonplace; but if patriotism is a commonplace, so are life and love and religion. I hope the day will never come when we shall be ashamed to be patriotic. We believe in this country of ours. We are proud of her new station among the first of the world powers. We are proud of her prosperity, and she was never more prosperous than she is today. No processions of starving laborers throng our streets as they do the streets of London, uttering their protests against the conditions which condemn them to grinding poverty. No, our laborers wax fat and kick; and the fatter they wax the harder they kick. We are proud too of the wonderful influence exercised for the world's benefit by that breezy whirlwind of intelligent audacity and phenomenal achievement, that steam engine in trousers, whom John Morley called a combination of St. Paul and St. Vitus, whose genius comprehends all

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subjects from international reorganizations to football, and who bears a name that comes down to us from the days of Knickerbocker and the rule of Wouter Van Twiller—Theodore Roosevelt.

He took aim and down came the Russian bear; he showed his teeth and out came the Japanese fox. I did all in my power to beat him, but you have doubtless observed that my efforts were not crowned with what might be called brilliant success. Some of us thought that, like Secretary Bonaparte, he wanted to break up and shatter the old "Constitution." But I am convinced we were wrong. I don't believe he ever thinks about the Constitution at all. I don't believe that Theodore Roosevelt would know the Constitution if he met it on Chestnut Street or had it up a tree in the wilds of Colorado. But if he ever should become acquainted with it, he will probably cry out with his usual energy: "Boys, let us get the old thing out, cut away some of its obsolete eighteenth century barnacles and make it over to suit the demands and necessities of the twentieth."

Yet, with all our pride, we are not unmindful of our own faults. You remember, perhaps, that when on some occasion the judges

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of England were preparing a memorial to the Queen, the draft began: "Conscious as we are of our own imperfections," and one dry old jurist—I think it was Lord Bowen—suggested as an amendment: "Conscious as we are of one another's imperfections." Those of you who are familiar with the history of the Netherlands—and I am sure that includes all the genial and well-fed burghers whom I see before me—remember the great associations which were created long ago in that land and which have done so much for its people, among them the "Society for the Promotion of the Public Good," organized in 1784. I wish I could pronounce its name, but if you will throw a lot of a's and j's and a few assorted consonants in a shaker, agitate them violently for some moments, pour the mixture into a cocktail glass and swallow instantly, you will get some faint idea of it. And I have been wondering what that Society for the Promotion of the Public Good might do if it should be turned loose in these United States of ours and allowed to get its deadly good work going among us.

In the first place—but I do not want to be understood as asserting my own views too dogmatically; people may differ from me; I

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have known them to, and yet live; and although I believe that it abhorred politics, I think it might with advantage turn its austere but kindly attention towards our rulers, and particularly our municipal rulers. The rule of graft in our cities has had a severe blow. It has had magazine articles written about it which ought to hurt it rather badly; but, more than that, in many of our cities the men who have been put in power by the votes of the blind, unthinking and ignorant mass of voters which our glorious system of popular suffrage permits to control our elections, have had a serious shaking up. You Philadelphians have had an experience, and once in a while we New Yorkers have a similar experience. Once in every few years the decent element in the community rises, acts, and makes itself felt, and then, with a grunt of self-satisfaction, it devotes itself to its business and to its amusements, and falls asleep while the little yahoos of politics who have been skulking in their hiding places, waiting until the giant slumbers, sneak out again and resume pilfering at the old stand. Am I wrong in saying, my brothers, that if *we* were the Society for the Promotion of the Public good and had the power, we would give to the thrifty man, the substantial

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man, the taxpayer, the controlling voice in the selection of those who administer the affairs of our municipalities? I confess I am not sanguine, however, that we shall ever come to that. Thirty years ago a Commission appointed by Governor Tilden in New York tried to accomplish that result, and their report, prepared by such men as James C. Carter, William Allen Butler and Simon Sterne, is a monument of wisdom. But the legislature turned it down—of course they turned it down. So that in New York, and in Philadelphia, and in Chicago, and in all the crowded cities of our land, your money is spent by the men chosen by those who believe that the more they can get out of you the better it is for them, because they pay nothing. They do not realize, of course, that by all the laws of political economy they are paying too; and no one could ever teach them the truth. But there is a power which the grafters fear; an intelligent public sentiment, aroused and directed by public-spirited men; and all that we can do is to keep that sentiment alive, and to remember that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

Next, that society might possibly deem it wise to call a halt in the tendency to wholesale and indiscriminate abuse, particularly the

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abuse of the unhappy rich. In these days we find that everybody's character is at the mercy of reckless pens and of irresponsible tongues. To-day it seems that the one great crime is to be well-to-do. The outcry is not new—it is as old as society itself. "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent," say the Proverbs. That ought to make John D. Rockefeller tear his hair, if he had any. "Law grinds the poor, the rich men rule the law," said Oliver Goldsmith; and Andrew Carnegie ought to exclude Oliver's works from his numberless libraries. "Riches grow in hell" said Milton. I fear some of our life insurance magnates have assented to that dictum and have taken to reading "Paradise Lost." But this outcry has become a shriek—a barbaric yawp. And what arouses my old Dutch wrath is that the chief yawpers are such austere, self-denying, plain-living creatures as the altruistic Hearst, with his simple, virtuous life and his inherited millions, and the buccaneer Lawson, who deluges us with the loose expectoration of his speech, pays thirty thousand dollars for a carnation, and yelps from day to day "Come, my fellow paupers, let us despoil the wealthy and overthrow the system which gives to brains and industry that which should belong to idleness

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and ignorance."

I do not mean to defend the men who have gained vast fortunes by methods deserving of condemnation; but let us not, like thoughtless children, condemn without knowledge merely because some malicious monkey has managed to get hold of a printing press. There is a commandment which is reiterated over and over again as if it were the only one in the Decalogue—"Thou shalt not steal;" but remember that there is another, of just as great authority—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." I say that this indiscriminate abuse of men who have gained wealth is unworthy, is un-American, is dangerous, leading to lawlessness and thence to anarchy. Every one in this free land has a right to enjoy the fruit of his own labor, his own intelligence, his own capacity. There is no law, human or divine, which gives to the multitude the sole power to decide what we are to do, how we are to behave, or how much wealth we shall possess, although our demagogues would have the people believe it. And they have with them one of the greatest powers on earth.

The night before he sailed for his sorely tried land, the astute statesman, Witte, said to

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a distinguished citizen of New York, "You call this a free country, but it is not free. It is not as free as mine. Your people have a master, and that master is more autocratic and infinitely more potent than the Emperor of Russia. The newspaper is your ruler." He was right. The most dangerous force in our country to-day, which does more than anything else to stir up evil passions, to foster abominable heresies, to divide us into classes and to set one class against another, is what we call the yellow press—a yellow peril in whose presence an Oriental invasion shrinks into insignificance. You all know what newspapers I mean. You all know that I do not refer to the decent and honorable newspapers which are and always have been one of the greatest instruments which divine Providence has employed to carry America forward in its grand development towards its splendid pre-eminence among nations. I speak of those daily compendiums of falsehood and of crime—whose columns are made up of the sickening details of robbery, adultery and murder mingled with lies about our fellow-citizens, private and public, and assaults upon all that is decent and honorable. I do honor to-night to a distinguished member of your Society who dared

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to defy the power of this Minotaur of modern times, and has been pursued and vilified because he had the courage to make a manly effort to curb the licentiousness of those who abuse the power of the press, that great engine of civilization. It was an act of bravery which rises to the dignity of heroism. You know that a dam is a small Indian copper coin of trifling value; and the Governor didn't care a dam.

I have a strong impulse to preach a little more, but I am going to resist it. Some lady once asked Lord Granville if he was not fond of going to church, and he replied, "Yes, Madam, I have a passion for it, but I restrain myself." I am going to restrain myself. One reason is that I recall that at a dinner of the New England Society some years ago, Senator Morgan of Alabama spoke for an hour and three-quarters, and when Mr. Choate arose at midnight to follow him, the genial gentleman who has represented us with such distinction at the Court of St. James, began by saying: "There are *some* subjects to which the previous speaker has not referred." Another reason is, that after dinner one must not be dismal. We want to hear pleasant things, and we don't want sermons.

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Let our Society for the Promotion of the Public Good teach us to say good things about our fellow-beings and not evil things; to be slow to censure others, slow to ascribe to them unworthy motives, slow to blame them without evidence and slow to convict them without proof. Our ancestors, the solid, substantial burghers of the Netherlands, were men of few words but when those words were spoken they carried weight. Let us, their descendants, give to the heedless, voluble and undiscriminating millions, who bestow unhesitating credence upon what is printed in red letters at the head of the columns of sensational journals, an example of cool and careful consideration, of wise restraint and of dignified forbearance, and we will be deserving of the approval of those mighty men of old who look down upon us from their lofty seats in the world where sooner or later we hope to share their eternal Nirvana.

GEORGE PAYNE RAINSFORD JAMES
A Writer of Many Books

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A Writer of Many Books.

IN a vainglorious mood I said not long ago to a well-dressed and apparently intelligent gentleman whom I met in the delightful library room of an accomplished lawyer in Washington City, that I had just had the privilege of conversing with the extremely modern novelist, Mr. Henry James. He smiled amiably and remarked airily "Oh, the two horsemen fellow!"

The remark was not without significance, because it betrayed the fact that my casual acquaintance, who might well be presumed to represent what is called "the average citizen" of this enlightened country; who was fairly well educated; who had read enough to know of the famous horsemen and of their habitual appearance in the opening chapter; who assuredly had skimmed the book-notices in our wonderful newspapers; was, after all, more distinctly impressed by the writer of half a century ago than by the contemporaneous

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author whose volumes bid fair to rival in number those of his namesake—an author whose style defies definition and bewilders the simple-minded searcher after a good story.

I confess that I feel towards these subtle writers with their involved sentences, their clouds of verbiage, and their incomprehensible wanderings in speculative mysteries much as an old Irish court-stenographer did when he said to me—"I hate these hypothesized questions. Give me 'Are you a butcher? Yes sir, I am.'" There is a delight about the direct and there is often disappointment about the indirect. The true lover of fiction revels in the directness of Dumas and of Dickens, but he usually accepts the intricacies of the modern school because he is told that he ought to do so or because alone and unaided he can discover nothing better in the product of the day.

To my Washington friend I replied, with that offensive assumption of superiority which marks the man familiar with his encyclopaedia, that the writer of whom he was thinking had closed his career and finished the last chapter of his life nearly half a century ago when Henry James was only seventeen and had not yet dreamed of *Daisy Miller* or fore-

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casted the genesis of the two closely printed volumes of *The Golden Bowl*. I discerned the truth however that the subject was not interesting and we changed the topic of conversation to the coming Charity Ball.

I.

The "horseman" tag has for many years attached itself to G. P. R. James and has done much to bring him into ridicule. It is strange how such tags preserve immortality, despite the fact that they are often unjust and deceiving. Few people think of Roger Brooke Taney, so long Chief Justice of our highest court, without remembering the accusation that he said in the Dred Scott case that "the negro has no rights which the white man is bound to respect," whereas he said no such thing. Many believe that Andrew Jackson announced the proposition that "to the victor belong the spoils," whereas it was Marcy who said that "to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy," and he was asserting that it was the belief of New York politicians. We have no good reason to contradict him. Van Buren was ridiculed for saying that "he would tread in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor" but he never said it. Illustrations of such popular

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fallacies might be multiplied almost indefinitely. These are political examples, and perhaps are out of place, but I like to be irrelevant. In literature, Bret Harte's parodies, the *Rejected Addresses*, and the many clever things which are contained in Mr. Hamilton's amusing compilation, show how easy it is to discover a mannerism and to attach to an author a label which will always identify him. There is only one writer who defies parody—the aforesaid Henry James, for nobody could ever tell which was the original and which the parody.

Possibly the popularity of the "horseman" remark is due in some degree to Thackeray, who began "that fatal parody," the burlesque "Barbazure, by G. P. R. Jeames Esq. etc." in this wise: "It was upon one of those balmy evenings of November which are only known in the valleys of Languedoc and among the mountains of Alsace, that two cavaliers might have been perceived by the naked eye threading one of the rocky and romantic gorges that skirt the mountain land between the Marne and the Garonne." Our own John Phoenix in his review of the "Life of Joseph Bowers the Elder"—I quote from the original edition, and not from the one printed by the Caxton Club which omits this gem—says of one of Mr.

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Bowers's supposititious works: "The following smacks, to us, slightly of 'Jeems.' 'It was on a lovely morning in the sweet spring time, when two horsemen might have been seen slowly descending one of the gentle acclivities that environ the picturesque valley of San Diego.' " Mr. Edmund Gosse continues the tradition when in his *Modern English Literature*, he tells us of the days when "the cavaliers of G. P. R. James were riding down innumerable roads;" while Justin McCarthy in the *History of Our Own Times* remarks pleasantly—"Many of us can remember, without being too much ashamed of the fact, that there were early days when Mr. James and his cavaliers and his chivalric adventures gave nearly as much delight as Walter Scott could have given to the youth of a preceding generation. But Walter Scott is with us still, young and old, and poor James is gone. His once famous solitary horseman has ridden away into actual solitude, and the shades of night have gathered over his heroic form." Here we perceive a variation from the familiar allusion. The "two horsemen" have resolved themselves into a single rider.

While we are speaking of the horsemen, it may not be amiss to recall what James thought

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of them. In 1851 he published a story called "The Fate," and in the sixteenth chapter he deals with them in a manner quite amusing but also quite pathetic. He is talking about plagiarism and he wanders into other fields. He says:

"As to repeating one's self, it is no very great crime, perhaps, for I never heard that robbing Peter to pay Paul was punishable under any law or statute, and the multitude of offenders in this sense, in all ages, and in all circumstances, if not an excuse, is a palliation, showing the frailty of human nature, and that we are as frail as others—but no more. The cause of this self-repetition, probably, is not a paucity of ideas, not an infertility of fancy, not a want of imagination or invention, but like children sent daily to draw water from a stream, we get into the habit of dropping our buckets into the same immeasurable depth of thought exactly at the same place; and though it be not exactly the same water as that which we drew up the day before it is very similar in quality and flavor, a little clearer or a little more turbid, as the case may be.

"Now this dissertation—which may be considered as an introduction or preface to the second division of my history—has been

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brought about, has had its rise, origin, source, in an anxious and careful endeavor to avoid, if possible, introducing into this work the two solitary horsemen—one upon a white horse—which, by one mode or another, have found their way into probably one out of the three of all the books I have written; and I need hardly tell the reader that the name of these books is legion. They are, perhaps, too many; but, though I must die, some of them will live—I know it, I feel it; and I must continue to write while this spirit is in this body.

"To say truth, I do not know why I should wish to get rid of my two horsemen, especially the one on the white horse. Wouvermans always had a white horse in all his pictures; and I do not see why I should not put my signature, my emblem, my monogram, in my paper and ink pictures as well as any painter of them all. I am not sure that other authors do not do the same thing—that Lytton has not always, or very nearly, a philosophizing libertine—Dickens, a very charming young girl, with dear little pockets; and Lever a bold dragoon. Nevertheless, upon my life, if I can help it, we will not have in this work the two horsemen and the white horse; albeit, in after times—when my name is placed with Homer

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and Shakespeare, or in any other more likely position—there may arise serious and acrimonious disputes as to the real authorship of the book, from its wanting my own peculiar and distinctive mark and characteristic.

“But here, while writing about plagiarism, I have been myself a plagiary; and it shall not remain without acknowledgment, having suffered somewhat in that sort myself. Here, my excellent friend, Leigh Hunt, soul of mild goodness, honest truth, and gentle brightness! I acknowledge that I stole from you the defensive image of Wouverman’s white horse, which you incautiously put within my reach, on one bright night of long, dreamy conversation, when our ideas of many things, wide as the poles asunder, met suddenly without clashing, or produced but a cool, quiet spark—as the white stones which children rub together in dark corners emit a soft phosphorescent gleam, that serves but to light their little noses.”¹

I hold no brief for James. I cannot assert

¹ As a matter of curiosity, I examined the twenty-one novels composing the “Revised Edition” of 1844-1849 to ascertain just how many introduced the horseman or horsemen in the first chapter. Seven disclose them; in eight they are absent; in four, the horsemen are “a party;” in two, they appear in the second chapter, the first being merely introductory.

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truthfully that I am particularly well acquainted with more than two or three of his numerous books, although I remember with delight the perusal of some of them when I was a boy, reading for the story alone. But I am confident that he had his merits, and that much of the abuse showered upon him by critics has been undeserved; that he was a careful and conscientious writer, whose novels are fit to be read, and that while he may no longer be ranked among "the best sellers," he deserves a high place of honor among those who have entertained, amused and instructed their fellow men. It is only about two years ago that the Routledges of London considered it wise to begin the new career of their house by reissuing in twenty-five volumes the historical novels, and cheaper reproductions are widely circulated. In a recent number of a New York magazine the editor says that "the fact is that James has always had a big public of his own—the public in fact that does *not* consult the 'Dictionary of National Biography'"—referring to the disparaging article in the Dictionary about which I will have something to say later on. There are authors who are always praised by the critics but ignored by the proletariat of readers; there are authors whom

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the critics affect to despise but who have many readers whose judgments are not embalmed in print. James seems to belong to the last-mentioned class. Yet few are acquainted with the man himself, and I have thought that it might not be amiss to give a short account of him, referring to the estimates of his character and ability by those of his own time and also to some autograph letters of his which are in my possession and which have not been published.

II.

The details of his life are not very well known; it was not a stirring or an eventful one. It was the life of a quiet, dignified and unostentatious man of letters, unmarked by fierce controversies and wholly devoid of domestic troubles. If his reputation has not long survived him among the critical it is because of a law of literature which Mr. Brander Matthews says is inexorable and universal. The man who has the gift of story telling and nothing else, who is devoid of humor, who does not possess the power of making character, who is a "spinner of yarns" only, has no staying power, and "however immense his immediate popularity may be, he sinks into

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oblivion almost as soon as he ceases to produce."¹ James seems to have had only in a small degree "the power of making character," and although he had a sense of humor, it manifests itself in his novels only in a mildly unobtrusive way.

George Payne Rainsford James was born in George Street, Hanover Square, London, on August 9th, 1799. His father was a physician who had seen service in the navy and was in America during the Revolution, serving in Benedict Arnold's descent on Connecticut. The son of the novelist, who is still living in Wisconsin, tells me that his grandfather (as he hinted) shot a man with his own hands to stop the atrocities of the siege in which Ledyard fell. The physician was also in the vessel which brought Rodney the news of De Grasse and enabled him to win the great naval victory which assisted England to make peace creditably. His paternal grandfather was Dr. Robert James, whose "powders" for curing fevers enjoyed great celebrity at one time,² but his chief title to fame is that he was admired by Samuel

¹ Brander Matthews: *Aspects of Fiction*, 153.

² They are said to have caused the death of Oliver Goldsmith, and pamphlets were published on the subject. Foster's *Oliver Goldsmith*, II. 461-463.

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Johnson who said of him, "no man brings more mind to his profession."¹ I regret that there is a cruel insinuation by the great personage which implies that Doctor Robert was not sober for twenty years, but there is some doubt whether Johnson was really referring to James.² Those were days of free indulgence, and much may be pardoned; at all events, no one could ever accuse the grandson of such an offence.

Young George attended the school of the Reverend William Carmalt at Putney, but he was not fortunate enough to have the advantage of a university education, which, despite the sneers of those who never attended a university, is an important element in the life of any man who devotes himself to literature. It is a great corrective, and those who regard the subject from a point of view wholly utilitarian do not comprehend in the least degree what is meant by it. James soon developed a fondness for the study of languages, not only what are called "the classics," but of Persian and Arabic although he says he "sadly failed in mastering Arabic." This taste of his may

¹ Boswell (Geo. Birkbeck Hill's Edition), I. 183.

² *Id.*, III. 442.

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account in part for his extensive vocabulary, and it may be that his diffuseness, so much criticised, was due in some degree to his ready command of an unusual number of words. In his younger days, he studied medicine, as might have been expected, but his inclination was in a different direction. He also wanted to go into the navy, but says Mr. C. L. James, "his father, who had a sailor's experience and manners, said, 'you may go into the army if you like—it's the life of a dog; but the navy is the life of a d—d dog, and you shant try it.'"

He did accordingly go into the army for a short time during the "One Hundred Days," and was wounded in one of the slight actions which followed Waterloo; but he never rose beyond the rank of lieutenant. His son writes: "The British and Prussian forces were disposed all along the frontier to guard every point, and Wellington, with whom my father was acquainted, did not like the arrangement—it was Blucher's. When Napoleon crossed the Sambre at Charlevoi, the Duke saw his purpose of taking Quatre Bras, between the English and Prussians, so he sent word to all his own detachments to fall in, 'running as to a fire.' * * * My father's company was among those too late for the

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great battle. I have heard him tell how the cuirassiers lay piled up, men and horses, to the tops of lofty hedges. * * * My father also said that he saw a dead cuirassier behind our lines, showing there must have been a time when they actually pierced the allied centre. When he was on the field they were bringing in French prisoners, who would have been massacred by the Prussians but that English soldiers guarded them. Many years afterwards the Duke of Wellington said to my father, in his abrupt way, 'You were at Waterloo, I think?' 'No,' he replied, 'I am sorry to say.' 'Why sorry to say,' rejoined Wellington, 'if you had been there, you might not have been here.' Another of his anecdotes about the Duke is that just after Waterloo, where it is well known that a great part of the allied army was wholly routed, some officers were talking about who 'ran,' when Wellington, who had been quietly listening to these unhopeful personalities, cut in thus: 'Run! who wouldn't have run under a fire like that? I am sure I should—if I had known any place to run to.'"

One incident in his army life is of interest. Some thirty years ago Mr. Maunsell B. Field, a gentleman whose title to fame is somewhat

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dubious, published a book called "Memories of Many Men." He knew James well, and collaborated with him in one of his books—"Adrian, or the Clouds of the Mind." Mr. Field says, after mentioning an alleged fact which is not a fact, viz: that James was taken prisoner before the battle of Waterloo and detained until after the battle, "The incident which occurred during his confinement there cast a gloom upon the rest of his life. For some cause which he never explained to me, he became engaged in a duel with a French officer. He escaped unhurt himself, but wounded his adversary who died, after lingering for months. I have still in my possession the old-fashioned pistols with which this duel was fought, which my deceased friend presented to me at the time of our early acquaintance."¹ Field's story is made up in a ridiculously inaccurate way. James was not captured before Waterloo, or after it, for that matter. During his later travels he became involved in a difficulty with a French officer and found himself compelled, according to the absurd practice of the time, to fight a duel with him. The Frenchman was not killed, but

¹ *Memories*: by M. B. Field p. 188—Harpers, 1874.

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only wounded in the arm, and the duel was fought with swords, not with pistols! The truth is, that after the sword-duel, James was challenged to fight again with pistols. Mr. C. L. James writes me thus: "It made him (G. P. R. James) very angry; and, being a good shot then, he felt confident of the result if he should accept but said he would put the point of honor to the French officer's regiment. They replied by inviting him to dine at the mess. On receiving this message, he took up his pistols which were ready, loaded, saying 'then we shall have no use for these,' and at that moment one of them went off, sending the bullet through the floor close to his foot, though he felt sure they were not cocked." Mr. Field undoubtedly meant to tell the truth, but his reminiscences cannot be relied upon in regard to James or to any one else.

As a lad of seventeen he wrote a number of sketches, afterwards published under the title of "A String of Pearls," which were rather free translations from the oriental tales he had studied so fondly.¹ He travelled extensively for those times, visiting France and Spain soon

¹ Allibone gives the date of publication as 1849; but it must have been published in some form prior to May 17, 1833. See *post*, page 200.

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after the abdication of Napoleon. These early travels and adventures supplied him with the idea of *Morley Ernstein*. He became acquainted with Cuvier and other men of eminence, and it is gratifying to Americans to know that Washington Irving liked him and gave him encouragement. It has been said that his first work was the *Life of Edward the Black Prince*, produced in 1822, but one of my letters, written in 1835, indicates that it was not produced earlier than 1836. The son thinks it must have been written before 1830. He had a disposition to enter political life, but he abandoned the idea in 1827. He was a mild Tory. His ambition was in the direction of a diplomatic career. His father had some influence with Lord Liverpool, who offered him the post of Secretary to an Embassy to China,—a temporary appointment only, and one which promised no preferment. It was declined, and a week later Lord Liverpool died suddenly.

In 1828 he married the daughter of Honоратус Leigh Thomas, an eminent physician of that day. She survived her husband exactly thirty-one years, dying at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on June 9th, 1891. The assertion made in some accounts of him that James married in the United States is wholly untrue. After the

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marriage, they lived in France, Italy and Scotland.

In 1825 he wrote his first novel, *Richelieu*, which was not published until 1829. Regarded by many as the best of his novels, it is an excellent example of his strength and of his weakness. It deals with elementary emotions, and makes but slight attempts to portray character except in the simplest and most obvious way. Although it bears the name of the great Cardinal, it might as well have been called "Louis XIII.," or "Chavigni," or "The Count de Blenau," for Richelieu himself appears but seldom on the scene and is not the hero or the central figure. The narrative runs briskly on, plentifully seasoned with deeds of daring and hair-breadth escapes, culminating in the familiar climax of the almost miraculous arrival of a pardon when the hero has bared his neck to receive the axe of the executioner. It is evident from the outset that the nobleman whose fortunes are the subject of the story and the conventional lady of his love will marry and "be happy ever after." The abundant historical and antiquarian padding is admirably devised and executed, well placed and never tiresome. The tale is skilfully constructed and if it teaches any lesson, it is that

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of courage, truth, honor and loyalty. Our modern "historical novels" are in many respects distinctly inferior to *Richelieu*. Singularly enough, he did not include it in the revised edition of his Works.

After reading *Richelieu*, Sir Walter Scott advised him to adopt literature as a profession, and as he imitated Scott, the value of the advice is not to be underestimated. As Mr. Field's story goes, James had kept the manuscript concealed from his father, but he managed to get an introduction to Scott, who promised to give him his opinion. After six months, no news came from Scotland. James was riding one day in Bond Street, when, his horse shying, his carriage was pressed against another. The occupant of the other carriage was Scott, and he invited James to call upon him. To his surprise and delight, Scott praised the book highly, and wrote his opinion, which enabled the lucky author to find a publisher, to whom he sold the copyright for a song. In his General Preface to the Works (1844-1849) James himself gives a very different account of the matter. He says that a friend showed Sir Walter one volume of a romance written long before, and he himself sent a letter to Scott asking advice in regard to persevering

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in a literary career. Some months passed, and James "felt somewhat mortified and a good deal grieved" at receiving no response, but one day, on returning from the country to London, he found a packet on his table containing the volume and a note. "The opinion expressed in that note," adds James, "was more favourable than I had ever expected, and certainly more favourable than I deserved; for Sir Walter was one of the most lenient of critics, especially to the young. However, it told me to persevere, and I did so."¹ Irving and Scott united in encouraging him to produce his next novel, *Darnley*, with another great Cardinal as a principal character. *Darnley* was sketched and drafted at Montreuil-sur-Mer in December, 1828, and was completed in a few months. It is still popular with readers of fiction and has much of the charm which pervades its predecessor. James lived for a time at Evreux, and *De l'Orme*, written there in 1829, appeared in 1830. *Philip Augustus* was produced in less than seven weeks, and was published in 1831. Under William IV. he was appointed Historiographer Royal, and published several pamphlets officially.² In 1842

¹ Works Vol. I. "The Gipsey," p. vii.

² Dictionary of National Biography, xxix., 209-210.

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he lived at Walmer, and was frequently a guest of the Duke of Wellington at Walmer Castle—a fact jocosely mentioned in the *Life of Charles Lever*, where it is recorded that Lever said to McGlashan that he must beware of James, who had become dangerous from irritation, but suggested that as James had been dining twice a week with the Duke, "he had eaten himself into a more than ordinary bilious temper."¹ In 1845 he went to Germany, partly for recreation and partly to obtain information to be used in the *History of Richard Cœur de Lion*, upon which he was then engaged. The illness of his children detained him for a year; and at Karlsruhe and Baden-Baden he wrote *Heidelberg* and the *Castle of Ehrenstein*. On his return to England he lived for some time near Farnham, Surrey, where he wrote voluminously. He was accustomed to rise at five in the morning, to write with his own hand until nine, and later in the day to dictate to an amanuensis, walking to and fro meanwhile.

Towards 1850 he decided to leave England and go to America.

His original intention was to settle in Can-

¹ Fitzpatrick's *Life of Lever*, II.—21.

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ada. He had met with severe pecuniary reverses. The collected edition of his works was illustrated with steel engravings, but after a few volumes had appeared the publisher failed. The engraver sued James as a partner in the enterprise, was successful, and poor James had to pay several thousand pounds. In this plight he sought his friend, the Duke of Northumberland, who endeavored to dissuade him from leaving England and offered him a signed check, with the amount left blank, asking him to accept it and fill the blank himself. To his credit, James declined the generous gift.¹

When he reached New York in July, 1850, he took lodgings in the old New York Hotel. He had many letters of introduction, including one to Horace Greeley, who, he said, had "the head of a Socrates and the face of a baby." Hotel life proving unsatisfactory, he rented Charles Astor Bristed's house at Hell Gate, opposite Astoria. Of his many troubles in getting into his new home, he wrote an amusing account in verse which Mr. Field prints.² Field tells a story of a wealthy man of New York who was introduced to James, and re-

¹ This is all according to Field, and may be taken for what it is worth.

² *Memoirs*, 191-195.

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marked that he was a great admirer of the works, that he believed he had read all that were published, and that there was one "which he vastly preferred to all the others." "And which is that?" asked James. "The Last Days of Pompeii," was the answer. "That is Bulwer's, not mine," replied the mortified novelist. He also tells of a lady who found in a village library what she supposed to be a copy of an English edition of one of James's novels in two volumes. She read them with much enjoyment, and did not discover until she had finished them, that she had been reading the first volume of one and the second volume of another. With admirable tact and discretion Field told this to James, and says "he winced under it."

In 1851 he hired a furnished house at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and later he bought property there, making some laudable efforts at farming. Mr. Field says:

"In the meantime he was also industriously pegging away at book-making, although to the casual observer he appeared to be the least occupied man in the place. He never did any literary work after eleven o'clock a. m. until evening. He was not accustomed to put his own hand to paper, when composing,

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but always employed an amanuensis. At this time he had in his service in that capacity the brother of an Irish baronet, who spoke and wrote English, French, German and Italian, and whom I had procured for him at the modest stipend of five dollars a week. When James was dictating, he always kept a paper of snuff upon the table on which his secretary wrote, and he would stride up and down the room, stopping every few minutes for a fresh supply of the titillating powder. He never looked at the manuscript, or made any corrections except upon proof-sheets."

During that summer James and Field produced the book to which reference has been made, finishing it in five weeks. Notwithstanding Field's assertion that "it was very kindly received by the critics," it does not appear to have enjoyed any marked success.

In 1852 he was appointed British Consul at Norfolk, Virginia. He was not contented there, as we may see from his letters; but he received many kindnesses, and on the last night he spent in the United States he spoke to Field of the Virginians, as "a warm-hearted people." His health suffered and his spirits also; the yellow fever raged in the city and caused him great trouble and anxiety. While in the United

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States he wrote *Ticonderoga*, *The Old Dominion*, and other novels; his fertile pen was always busy. His latest work was *The Cavalier*, published in 1859. In 1856 the Consulate was removed to Richmond. At his earnest request he was transferred from Virginia in September, 1858, and was appointed Consul General at Venice, where it was hoped that his health would improve. The war between France and Austria soon broke out, his labors and anxieties were increased and in April, 1860, his illness became serious. On June 9, 1860, he died of an apoplectic stroke, "an utter break up of mind preceding the end," as Lever wrote. He was buried in Venice—some accounts say in the Lido cemetery, but the monument, erected by the English residents in Venice, is in the Protestant portion of the cemetery of St. Michele, which is on an island not far from the Lido. Laurence Hutton, in his *Literary Landmarks of Venice*, refers to a vague tradition among the older alien residents that he was buried in the Lido, where, Hutton says, there are a few very ancient stones and monuments marking the graves of foreign visitors to Venice, none of them seeming to be of a later date than the middle of the eighteenth century. But Sir Francis Vincent,

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the last British Ambassador to the Venetian Republic, is buried there. Mr. Hutton adds that the stone in St. Michele is "a tablet blackened by time, broken and hardly decipherable;" but when I saw it in the summer of 1906 it was only slightly discolored, and not broken at all. It showed no evidence of restoration, and was blackened only as much as might be expected of a stone forty-five years old in a climate like that of Venice. The epitaph, written by Walter Savage Landor, is absolutely distinct and easily read:

"George Payne Rainford James.
British Consul General in the Adriatic.
Died in Venice, on the 9th day of June, 1860.
His merits as a writer are known wherever
the English language is, and as a man they rest
on the hearts of many.

A few friends have erected this humble and perishable monument."

Hutton attempts to give the epitaph in full but makes an unaccountable error in substituting "heads" for "hearts." It is another illustration of the ill will of the fates that even on his tombstone his name should be engraved incorrectly. '*Rainford*' is doubtless the mistake of the Italian who prepared

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the monument.¹

Mr. J. A. Hamilton, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, says: "An epitaph, in terms of somewhat extravagant eulogy, was written by Walter Savage Landor." The epitaph, which I copied word for word, scarcely deserves Mr. Hamilton's censure. Surely there is nothing extravagant about it. I regret that in such a valuable work as the *Dictionary*, the account of James is so slight, perfunctory, and in many respects inaccurate. It could have been made much better, and it is in marked contrast with most of the biographical sketches included in that admirable compendium.

III.

Mr. Hamilton sums up in a careless and indifferent way the literary career of James. "Flimsy and melodramatic as James's romances are, they were highly popular. The historical setting is for the most part laboriously accurate, and though the characters are without life, the moral tone is irreproachable; there is a pleasant spice of adventure about the plots, and the style is clear and correct. The writer's

¹ It is said, but on rather dubious authority, that he was sometimes called "George Prince Regent James," and that many believed it to be his real name.

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grandiloquence and artificiality are cleverly parodied by Thackeray in 'Barbazure, by G. P. R. Jeames, Esq., etc.,' in 'Novels by Eminent Hands,' and the conventional sameness of the opening of his novels, 'so admirable for terseness,' is effectively burlesqued in 'The Book of Snobs,' chap. ii. and xvi." It is the old story: Thackeray made fun of him, and so-away with him! Yet there was a time when everybody read James and few read Thackeray. I venture to assert that the romances are neither flimsy nor melodramatic, unless Scott's romances are flimsy and melodramatic. I find no grandiloquence in them.

Probably the best and most authoritative sketch of his life is contained in the preface which he wrote for the collected edition of his novels, published, in twenty-one volumes, in 1844-1849. Of course this includes no account of the last ten years of his career. The number of volumes he gave to the world was enormous, as may be seen from the list of his works compiled from the *Dictionary* and from Allibone's laboriously minute record. They tell of his untiring industry; evidently he loved to write for the sake of writing. His books brought him a goodly income, but he was always poor; careless about his expenditure;

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ever ready and willing to give aid to those who needed it, particularly to his literary brethren; a noble, honest Christian gentleman, devoid of selfishness; a good husband and father, simple and direct in his ways, charitable, open-hearted, deserving of the esteem and affection of all who knew him. It was said of him by a writer who deplored "the fatal facility" of the novels, that "there is a soul of true goodness in them—no maudlin affectation of virtue, but a manly rectitude of aim which they derive directly from the heart of the writer. His enthusiastic nature is visibly impressed upon his productions. They are full of his own frank and generous impulses—impulses so honorable to him in private life. Out of his books, there is no man more sincerely beloved. Had he not even been a distinguished author, his active sympathy in the cause of letters would have secured to him the attachment and respect of his contemporaries."

His activity was by no means limited to the field of prose fiction. In poetry, he produced *The Ruined City* in 1828; *Blanche of Navarre*, a five-act play, in 1839, and *Camaralzaman*, a "fairy drama" in three acts, in 1848. My "first edition" of *Blanche of Navarre*, a pamphlet of ninety-eight pages, with a dedication

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to Talfourd—until to-day, after an existence of sixty-six years, unvexed by the paper-knife, and in that “unopened” condition so dear to the heart of a collector—does not disclose any good reason for its creation. The finale of Act III. is an example of its “lofty poetic tone”—

“Don John (*pointing to the gallery*).
We have spectators there! A lady points!
Let us go succour her!

Don Ferdinand (*stopping him*).

Nay, I beseech!

Most likely 'tis my sister!—Foolish child!
She has maids there now—Lo, they are gone!
We'll close the night with wine.”

[*The drop scene descends to dumb-show.*]

So we might suppose. The hospitable suggestion of Don Ferdinand has a flavor of reckless rioting about it which brings to mind the one time favorite amusement of a Tammany Hall leader—“opening wine.”

It is only fair to let him tell his own story about his literary fecundity. He says:

“Before I close my present task, I may be permitted to say a few words in regard to the observations which are uniformly made upon every author who writes rapidly and often. I will not repeat the frequently noticed fact,

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that the best writers have generally been the most voluminous; for I must contend that neither the number of an author's works, nor the rapidity with which they are produced, affords any criterion whatsoever by which to judge of their merit. They may be numerous and excellent, like those of Voltaire, Scott, Dryden, Vega, Boccacio and others; they may be rapidly written, and yet accurate, like the great work of Fenelon, and they may be quite the reverse. * * * I may mention, in my own case, a few circumstances which may account for the number and rapidity of my works. In the first place, all the materials for the tales I have written, and for many more than I ever shall write, were collected long before this idea of entering upon a literary career ever crossed my mind. In the next place, I am an early riser, and any one who has that habit must know that it is a grand secret for getting through twice as much as lazier men can perform. Again, I write and read during some portion of every day, except when I am travelling, and even then if possible. I need not point out, that regular application in literary, as well as all other kinds of labour, will effect results which no desultory efforts, however energetic, can obtain. Then,

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again, the habit of dictating instead of writing with my own hand, which I first attempted at the suggestion of Sir Walter Scott, relieves me of the manual labour which many authors have to undergo, leaves the mind clear and free to act, and affords facilities inconceivable to those who have not tried, or, having tried, have not been able to attain it."¹

I am not convinced that the custom of dictating is one which should be observed by an author who aims at the highest excellence.

In the accounts of his life and his work there are many discrepancies and contradictions. For example Mr. Allibone—who is not altogether trustworthy in details—tells us that his first book was *A Life of Edward The Black Prince*, published in 1822; but the *Dictionary of National Biography* ascribes that publication to the year 1836, and the *Dictionary* is undoubtedly right, for he said in 1835 "The *Black Prince* comes on but slowly."² The *Dictionary* says that as "historiographer royal"—a sonorous title which must have afforded great pleasure to its bearer—he published in 1839 a *History of the United States Boundary Question*, but Mr. Allibone insists that it was

¹ Works, Vol. I. xiv.

² Letter to Cunningham, *post*, page 203.

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not his production. I have an autograph letter of James which, I think, warrants the belief that Allibone is wrong. The letter is a good example of his serious epistolary style.

"Fair Oak Lodge, Petersfield
Hants, 4th November, 1837.

My Lord:

A few months previous to the death of his late Majesty, he was pleased to appoint me Historiographer in ordinary for England into which office I was duly sworn. On the accession of Her Majesty our present Queen, although I was informed that the office did not necessarily lapse on the death of the monarch who conferred it, I applied to Her Majesty through her Lord Chamberlain for her gracious confirmation of the honor her Royal Uncle had conferred upon me. Many months have now elapsed even since Lord Conyngham did me the honor of writing to inform me that the time had not then arrived for Her Majesty to take into consideration that class of offices and I am induced in consequence to apply directly to your Lordship as I understand that your department of the government embraces such matters. I should have waited longer ere I thus intruded upon your valuable

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time but that I am about to publish a new Historical work of some importance in the title to which must appear whether I am or am not still Historiographer. If I am to understand by the silence which has been maintained upon the subject that it is Her Majesty's determination to deprive me of the office which her royal uncle conferred I must bow to her gracious pleasure and neither my station in society, my fortune, or my views of what is right require or permit me to say one word to alter such a resolution. Should that determination however not have been formed allow me to submit to your Lordship that to dismiss me from a post to which I was so lately appointed is to cast a stigma of which I am not deserving. If I have ever written anything that is calculated to injure society; if I have ever debased my pen to pander to bad appetites of any kind; if I have ever failed to dedicate its efforts to the promotion of truth, virtue, and honor, not only let the dismissal be made public but the cause of that stigma be assigned. But if on the contrary to have done my best, and that perhaps with more reputation than my writings merit, to promote all that is good and noble; if to have bestowed vast labour, anxious research, valuable time, and many hun-

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dreds of pounds for which I can hope no return on such works as the History of Charlemagne, the History of Edward the Black Prince, the History of Chivalry, and my letters to Lord Brougham on the system of Education in the higher German States—if these circumstances afford any claim to honor or distinction, I think in my case they may stand in the way of an act which I cannot yet make up my mind to believe that Her Majesty's present ministers would advise. I have given up the expectation indeed that a fair share of honors and distinctions—or in fact any share at all—should be bestowed upon literary men in this country, even when a high education, upright conduct, and a fortune not ill employed combine with literary reputation; but I still trust that that which has been given will not be taken away.

I have now to apologize, my Lord—and I feel that an apology is very necessary—for addressing this letter to your private house; but your kindness and courtesy when, as a result of some communications between my friend Sir David Brewster and myself, I addressed you on the state of literature in England have encouraged me to trespass upon you in some manner.

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I have the honor to be, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient servant.

G. P. R. James."

I have not been able to discover what effect this letter had, but it is evident that the "Historical work" was the pamphlet on the Boundary Question as I do not find a record of any other "historiographical" work to which the language of the letter is applicable.

The *Dictionary of National Biography* credits James with *Memoirs of Celebrated Women* (three volumes, 1837), but Allibone says that he had no share in it, further than writing a preface or "something of that kind." The *Dictionary* further informs us that "about 1850 he was appointed British Consul for Massachusetts"—an impossible office—and that he was transferred to Norfolk, Virginia, 1852, becoming Consul General at Venice in 1856. Allibone makes him Consul at Richmond, Virginia, in 1852 and Consul General at Venice in September, 1858. His friend Hall places him at Norfolk in 1852 and in Venice in 1859. *Appleton's Cyclopædia* follows Allibone as to dates, but very properly ignores Richmond in favor of Norfolk. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* says that Irving encouraged him to pro-

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duce the *Life of the Black Prince* in 1822 (an evident error), sends him as "Consul to Richmond" in 1852 and transfers him to Venice in September, 1858. The truth is that he went to Norfolk in 1852, to Richmond in 1856, and to Venice in 1858. As we have seen, even the place of his interment is not without uncertainty. These variances in regard to the facts of his life are due to the comparative neglect which has befallen his memory. Perhaps they are not of much importance. Although he had numerous friends and acquaintances, none of them, except Mr. S. C. Hall and Maunsell B. Field, left anything approaching an account of his life, and even Mr. Hall's reminiscences are meagre and cursory, while Mr. Field's are largely apocryphal.

He surely possessed the art of making friends. Before his marriage he knew not only Scott and Irving, but Byron, Leigh Hunt, and Walter Savage Landor, his friendship with Hunt and Landor continuing to the end of his life. Probably he never saw Shelley, but he admired greatly the writings of that radical enthusiast. He knew Thackeray, but did not like him; perhaps the parody galled him. He detested the brilliant, showy, shallow Count D'Orsay. His son says that he never heard his father

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speak of Dickens as if they had met.¹ "He fully acknowledged the power and versatility of Dickens' works, but there was something in them which did not please him. He had detected, if it is there—suspected, if it is not—the essential vulgarity which this master of pathos and humor is said to have shown those who came in personal contact with him." He had some acquaintance with Bulwer-Lytton. "It is odd," remarks the younger James, "but his tone towards this eminent author, who at some points (*Richelieu* and the historic novels) approached near enough his own line for rivalry, was rather one of compassion. He knew the personal and domestic sorrows of one whom unfriendly critics accused of soulless dandyism; and he seemed to have a sort of friendly feeling for that partially unsuccessful ambition which made the author of books as unlike as *Pelham* and *Pausonias* attempt so many things without reaching the highest rank in any." The Duke of Northumberland, the Duke of Wellington, Charles Lever, Thomas Campbell, and Allan Cunningham, were also friends. In America, he was known and well received by President Pierce, Hawthorne,

¹ Letter of C. L. James.

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Longfellow, Charles Sumner, Farragut, Barron, Henry A. Wise, Roger A. Pryor, John Tyler, Sumner, Winder, General Scott, Edward Everett, Marcy, Caleb Cushing and a host of others. His gentle, modest nature, his cultivated taste, and his frank, pleasant ways seem to have attracted all who came within the compass of his friendship. He had much conversation with Marcy. Each had some idea of sounding the other diplomatically; both took snuff and neither proposed to be sounded. When James asked Marcy something which the latter did not choose to answer, Marcy would ask him for a pinch of snuff, and he readily perceived that this evasion was as good for two as for one.

Mr. Field says of him: "If he was sometimes a tedious writer, he was always the best storyteller that I ever listened to. He had known almost everybody in his own country, and he never forgot anything. The literary anecdotes alone which I have heard him relate would suffice to fill an ordinary volume. He was a big-hearted man, too-tender, merciful, and full of religious sentiment; a good husband, a devoted father, and a fast friend." Such is the testimony of all his acquaintances who have left any record of their impressions.

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IV.

It is not my purpose to present any critical study of James or of his works, but only to submit a few of his unpublished letters, in which his easy grace of style and his frank and simple nature are manifest; to give some of the contemporary estimates of him; and to recall to the minds of readers of our own day a literary personality which should not be entirely forgotten.

Among the good friends of James of whom I have spoken was that other novelist, almost as prolific in production, but better remembered by modern readers—Charles Lever. When the author of *Charles O'Malley* was the editor of the Dublin University Magazine, he wrote to a certain Reverend Edward Johnson, now wholly lost to fame, requesting him to contribute to the magazine and inviting him to visit the editor; but by mistake he addressed the letter to James. "Though he liked the man," says Mr. Fitzpatrick, "he rather pooh-poohed the stereotyped 'two cavaliers' of G. P. R. James, who of a fine autumnal day might be seen, etc."¹ Lever was too kind-hearted to explain the error, and James not only contrib-

¹ Life of Lever, II. 21.

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uted to the magazine but visited Lever at Templeogue. The story "*De Lunatico Inquirendo*" was supposed to have been written by Lever, who wrote only the preface. "*Arrah Neil*" was published in the Magazine, a work which has peculiar merit and one character, Captain Barecolt, who is among James's best people. It is said that James abused McGlashan for having "emasculated his jokes." "Where be they? as we used to say in the Catechism" was Lever's comment. One Major Dwyer, referred to in Fitzpatrick's *Life of Lever*, says: "Lever would sometimes say that he wanted powder for his magazine. 'It is doubtful whether James's contributions,' he said, 'were James's powders at all, or merely that inferior substitute which the Pharmacopoeia condemns.'" Chamber's Cyclopaedia stated, twenty years before the death of James, that he was in the habit of dictating to minor scribes his thick-coming fancies. Mr. R. H. Horne would have it that he always dictated his novels, but that was a very exaggerated statement. He dictated only at intervals. Major Dwyer tells of a novel composed by James at Baden, that "it was penned by an English artist who resided at Lichtenthal, and also spoke the purest South Devonian, and moreover wrote English nearly

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as he pronounced it. James's flowery language thus rendered, was highly amusing; I had an opportunity of reading some pages of copy."

In spite of his disparaging remarks, Lever was attached to the man himself, and we find the two romance-writers together in 1845, at Karlsruhe—where, as Mr. Downey says in his *Life of Lever*, "G. P. R. James and himself were the cynosure of all eyes"—and later at Baden. Lever dedicated to James his novel *Roland Cashel*, in 1849—"a Roland for your Oliver, or rather for your Stepmother," said Lever, for James had dedicated to him the novel with that title in 1846. Soon afterwards, however, they became separated, as James went to the United States where he remained about eight years. One incident connected with the *Dublin* is worthy of remembrance. In Volume XXVII of the Magazine (1846) appeared some verses beginning "A cloud is on the western sky." They were said to be "Lines by G. P. R. James" and were "prefaced by a note: 'My dear L—, I send you the song you wished to have. The Americans totally forgot, when they so insolently calculated upon aid from Ireland in a war with England, that their own apple is rotten at the core. A nation with five or six million slaves who would go to war with an

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equally strong nation with no slaves is a mad people. Yours, G. P. R. James.' 'The Cloud,' (amongst other things not intended to be pleasant to Americans) called upon the dusky millions to 'shout,' and the author of the 'Lines' declared that Britain was ready to 'draw the sword in the sacred cause of liberty.'" It was Lever's joke. Poor James had never heard of the poem until years later, in 1853, an attempt was made to drive James out of Norfolk, Virginia, because of it. "God forgive me," said Lever, "it was my doing." Lever declared that he had no more notion of James's "powder" exciting a national animosity than that Holloway's Ointment could absorb a Swiss glacier.¹ The son says that during the first winter they spent in Norfolk there were no less than eight fires in the house, or in other parts of the block, which James attributed to deliberate attempts to burn him out on account of his supposed abolitionist views.

Lever was Consul at Spezzia when James was in Venice, and they renewed their old intimacy. The younger James says that he was a very eccentric genius—a thorough specimen of the wild Irishman. Among Lever's traits was

¹ Fitzpatrick's Life of Lever, II.—418.

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chronic impecuniosity. Another was that he, as well as his family, delighted in out-door life and could do everything athletic. "When he was at Venice he told us he was threatened with a visit from a British war vessel, which it would be his duty to receive in state, and (of course) he had no boat or other means of doing so with proper pomp. 'But,' he said, 'we can take the British flag in our mouth and swim out to meet her, singing Rule Britannia.'"

Notwithstanding the manifestations of hostility by the good people of Norfolk, it may be remembered that when James was transferred to Venice, the Virginian poet, John R. Thompson, addressed to him some farewell verses, published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, which I consider worthy of reproduction:

Good bye! they say the time is up—

The "solitary horseman" leaves us,
We'd like to take a "stirrup cup,"

Though much indeed the parting grieves us:
We'd like to hear the glasses clink

Around a board where none was tipsy,
And with a hearty greeting drink
This toast—The Author of the Gipsy!

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The maidens fair of many a clime
Have blubbered o'er his tearful pages,
The Ariosto of his time,
Romancist of the Middle Ages;
In fiction's realm a shining star,
(We own ourselves his grateful debtors)
Who would not call our G. P. R.—
"H. B. M. C."—a Man of Letters?

But not with us his pen avails
To win our hearts—this English scion,
Though there are not so many tales
To every roaring British Lion—
For he has yet a prouder claim
To praise, than dukes and lords inherit,
Or wealth can give, or lettered fame—
His honest heart and modest merit.

An Englishman, whose sense of right
Comes down from glorious Magna Charta,
He loves, and loves with all his might,
His home, his Queen, Pale Ale, the Garter;
The last embraces much, 'tis best
To comprehend just what is stated—
For *Honi Soit*—you know the rest
And need not have the French translated.

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O! empty bauble of renown,
So quickly lost and won so dearly,
Our Consul wears the Muses' crown,
We love him for his virtues merely;
A Prince, he's ours as much as Fame's,
And reigns in friendship kindly o'er us,
Then call him George Prince Regent James,
And let his country swell the chorus.

His country! we would gladly pledge
Its living greatness and its glory—
In Peace admired, and "on the edge
Of battle" terrible in story:
A little isle, its cliffs it rears
'Gainst wind and waves in wrath united,
And nobly for a thousand years
Has kept the fire of freedom lighted.

A glowing spark in time there came,
Like sunrise, o'er the angry water,
And here is fed, an altar flame,
By Britain's democratic daughter—
From land to land a kindred fire
Beneath the billow now is burning.
O may it thrill the magic wire
With only love and love returning!

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But since we cannot meet again
Where wine and wit are freely flowing,
Old friend! this measure take and drain
A brimming health to us in going:
And far beneath Italia's sky,
Where sunsets glow with hues prismatic,
Bring out the bowl when you are dry,
And pledge us by the Adriatic!

The same Major Dwyer relates at some length the conversations of the guests at Lever's home in Ireland. Speaking of a visit of Thackeray about 1842, he says: "James had been living at Brussels previously, and an intimacy had sprung up between Lever and him. Thackeray's star was then barely peeping over the eastern horizon; Lever's had attained an altitude that rendered it clearly visible to the uncharmed eye, whilst James's had already passed its point of culmination, and was in its descending node." I do not know what the eloquent Major meant by an "uncharmed eye," but his figures of speech are quite luxuriant. He does not think that Thackeray and James met at Lever's house, but he tells of a dinner there where a Captain Siborne, Doctor Anster, and the Major were asked to meet James. It appears that after dinner, James took a very

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decided lead in the conversation on horsemanship and military tactics. "James" remarks the Major, "was not horsey-looking; one would at first sight be inclined to set him down as an exception to the general rule, that 'all Britons are born riders;' he looked more like a seaman than a soldier." This is deliciously British—as if a man could not talk well about horses unless he had a horsey look or drive fat oxen unless he himself were fat. In talking about horses and riders, James evidently did not foresee that in the future his name would be so closely associated with "one horseman" or even two, threading romantic gorges. It would have been better for his fame, if he had eschewed horsemen. "Why," continues the Major, "he should have selected two such topics puzzled both Siborne and myself, but I subsequently found that James liked to seize upon and talk categorically about things which other individuals of the company present might be suspected of considering their own peculiar hobbies." This device for enlivening post-prandial dullness by stirring up solemn and conceited prigs is quite familiar, but it does not seem to have occurred to the Major that the clever novelist was making game of the two military magnates. He tells us further

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how Siborne declined "to discuss professional matters with a civilian," and closes his pompous and heavy remarks with this gem of concentrated wisdom: "James, so fond of horse-flesh, finished his career as Consul General at Venice *where the sight of a horse is never seen.*" I suppose that the Major would have considered it more fitting if James had selected some place to die in where "the sight of a horse could be seen" at all times by merely looking out of the window. It is not difficult to imagine the joy with which the nimble-minded James put through their paces the heavy-witted and cumbrous Captain and Major at the pleasant dinner-table of Charles Lever. It reminds me of an occasion when a sincere and simple-minded Briton undertook to engage in single combat with Mark Twain over a statement thrown out by the equally sincere and simple-minded Clemens that the people of the Philippine Islands had a perfect right to make arson and murder lawful if they considered it proper to incorporate in their constitution a provision to that effect. His powerful arguments did not produce the slightest change in the convictions of Mr. Clemens.

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V.

However severely the sapient compilers of *Chambers' Cyclopædia* or the critics of our own generation may sneer at the novels—the fiction of the twentieth century being in the estimation of our contemporaries so vastly superior to all that has gone before—it is something to have had the approval of Christopher North, who was not given to bestowing lavish commendation upon the work of mere Englishmen. If you will take from the shelves the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, you will find these words:

"*North*: Mr. Colburn has lately given us two books of a very different character [from that of some previously mentioned], *Richelieu* and *Darnley*—by Mr. James. *Richelieu* is one of the most spirited, amusing and interesting romances I ever read; characters well drawn—incidents well managed—story perpetually progressive—catastrophe at once natural and unexpected—moral good, but not goody—and the whole felt, in every chapter, to be the work of a—gentleman.

Shepherd: And what o' *Darnley*?

North: Read and judge."¹

¹ *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, II. 370—Blackwood Edition, 1887.

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Edgar Allan Poe, who thought himself a critic while he was an original genius absolutely unfitted for just or accurate criticism, said that James was lauded from mere motives of duty, not of inclination—duty erroneously conceived. "His sentiments are found to be pure," wrote Poe, "his morals unquestionable and pointedly shown forth—his language indisputably correct." But he calls him an indifferent imitator of Scott, accuses him of having little pretension to genius, and adds that we "seldom stumble across a novel emotion in the solemn tranquillity of his pages."¹ Elsewhere Poe says: "James's multitudinous novels seem to be written upon the plan of the songs of the Bard of Schiraz, in which, we are assured by Fadladeen, 'the same beautiful thought occurs again and again in every possible variety of phrase.'" This is, perhaps, a fair comment upon the work of a writer who produced too many books.

Samuel Carter Hall, who knew James well, and who gossips with garrulous freedom about everybody, speaks of him in an admiring way. After observing that very little was known of James's life, he says: "I knew him and esteemed

¹ *Marginalia*, Black's Edition—III. 393.

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him as an agreeable and kindly gentleman, somewhat handsome in person, and of very pleasant manners. He had the aspect, and indeed the character, that usually marks a man of sedentary occupations. His work all day long, and often into the night, must have been untiring, for he by no means drew exclusively on his fancy; he must have resorted much to books and have been a great reader, not only of English, but of continental histories; and he travelled a good deal in the countries in which the scenes of his historic fictions were principally laid. His novels have always been popular—they are so now, although many competitors for fame, with higher aims and perhaps loftier genius, have of late years supplied the circulating libraries. It was no light thing to run a race with Sir Walter Scott, and not to be altogether beaten out of the field. His great charm was the interest he created in relating a story, but he had masterly skill in delineating character, and in 'chivalric essays' none of his brethren surpassed him.¹ He gives to James more praise for character-drawing than most of the critics bestow.

Hall quotes from Alison: "There is a con-

¹ Hall's Book of Memories, 263.

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stant appeal in his brilliant pages, not only to the pure and generous, but to the elevated and noble sentiments. He is imbued with the very soul of chivalry, and all his stories turn on the final triumph of those who are influenced by such feelings. Not a word or a thought which can give pain to the purest heart ever escapes from his pen."

The genial journalist, William Jerdan, in his Autobiography pays a deserved tribute to James. He says: "Among the warm friendships to which I may allude, there is not one more sincere, more lasting, or more grateful to my feelings, than that which I have the honour and delight to couple with the admired and estimable name of G. P. R. James. I think it was the production of 'The Ruined City,' for private circulation, which first introduced us to each other; and from that hour (I remember the pleasure I received from his volunteering a trial of his skill occasionally in the 'Gazette') I now look back on a quarter of a century upon a close intercourse of minds and hearts, without a passing shade to dull its bright and cheering continuity. I need not dwell on those voluminous writings which have placed Mr. James in the foremost rank of our national fictitious literature, nor need I,

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in his case, illustrate my theme of the uncertainty of literature as a remunerative pursuit—with a private fortune, and the genius which has produced so many admirable works, the author has now fallen back upon a consulate at Norfolk, in America, where, if report speaks truth, he is exposed even to danger in consequence of petty resentment against something he wrote long ago about Slavery!—but, I may say, from nearer and more abundant observation than the world could attain, that the utmost appreciation of his genius must fall short of what is due to his personal worth and nobility of nature. As no author ever excelled him in the purity and rectitude of his publications—every tone of which tends to inspire just moral sentiment, and exalted virtue, and brotherly love, and universal benevolence, and the improvement, carrying with it the progress and happiness of his fellow creatures—so no man in private life ever more zealously practiced the precepts which he taught, and was charitable, liberal, and generous, aye, beyond the measure of cold prudence, and without an atom of selfish reserve. To his fellow-labourers on the oft-ungrateful soil of letters, he was ever indulgent and munificent; and were this the fitting time, I could record

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acts of his performing that would shed a lustre on any character, however celebrated in merited biographical panegyric. I trust I may state, without compromising the privacy of friendly confidence, that I knew him, as he was ever ready to make sacrifices to friendship, sacrifice half a fortune, legally in his possession, to a mere point of honourable, I might say, romantically honourable feeling, and founded indeed on one of those family romances in which we find fact more extraordinary than fiction; and amongst lesser instances of his general sympathies for all who stood in need of succour, I may mention his procuring me the gratification of handing over £75 to the Literary Fund, as the price received from Messrs. Coburn and Bentley for a manuscript entitled 'The String of Pearls.'¹

I have referred to the remark in *Chambers' Cyclopædia* about the custom of James to dictate to an amanuensis, a custom he attempted to defend. The writers for this useful work, now rather antiquated, were quite given to the exercise of censorious judgment about authors who did not preserve their popularity. They say of James, however, that he was per-

¹ *Autobiography*, IV. 210.

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haps the best of the numerous imitators of Scott, and that if he had concentrated his powers on a few congenial subjects or periods of history, and "resorted to the manual labor of penmanship as a drag-chain on the machine, he might have attained to the highest honors of this department of composition. As it is, he has furnished many light, agreeable and picturesque books, none of questionable tendency." The Cyclopaedia breaks into exclamation points when it chronicles the fact that the original works of Mr. James "extend to one hundred and eighty-nine volumes," and that he edited almost a dozen more. It then quotes from some unnamed critic whom it calls a "lively writer,"¹ and as I am endeavoring to present the contemporary estimates of James, I venture to reproduce the quotation:

"There seems to be no limit to his ingenuity, his faculty of getting up scenes and incidents, dilemmas, artifices, *contretemps*, battles, skirmishes, disguises, escapes, trials, combats, adventures. He accumulates names, dresses, implements of war and peace, official retinues, and the whole paraphernalia of customs and costumes, with astounding alacrity. He appears

¹ It was R. H. Horne. *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844) p. 136.

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to have exhausted every imaginable situation, and to have described every available article of attire on record. What he must have passed through—what triumphs he must have enjoyed—what exigencies he must have experienced—what love he must have suffered—what a grand wardrobe his brain must be! He has made some poetical and dramatic efforts, but this irresistible tendency to pile up circumstantial particulars is fatal to those forms of art which demand intensity of passion. In stately narratives of chivalry and feudal grandeur, precision and reiteration are desirable rather than injurious—as we would have the most perfect accuracy and finish in a picture of ceremonials; and here Mr. James is supreme. One of his court romances is a book of brave sights and heraldic magnificence—it is the next thing to moving at our leisure through some superb and august procession."

The lively writer has a style which displays the worst faults of the middle nineteenth century, but he is really not far wrong in his conclusions. The Cyclopaedia sums up the matter in a sentence which tells the story and signifies that the man wrote too much:

"The sameness of the author's style and characters is, however, too marked to be pleasing."

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I timidly venture to suggest that the same thing may be true of Kipling and hope that I may not be annihilated by the bolts of Jupiter for such a daring piece of sacrilege. Having gone so far—but I will refrain from mentioning some other makers of novels with regard to whom the same fable might be narrated.

We may easily understand that the accusation of "sameness" is one which is not very serious when preferred against the author of nearly two hundred volumes. As Allibone says, "He who composes a library is not to be judged by the same standard as he who writes but one book." We must remember that Professor Wilson praises him and Leigh Hunt, about whose taste and discrimination there can be no question, says of him:

"I hail every fresh publication of James, though I half know what he is going to do with his lady, and his gentleman, and his landscape, and his mystery, and his orthodoxy, and his criminal trial. But I am charmed with the new amusement which he brings out of old materials. I look on him as I look on a musician famous for 'variations.' I am grateful for his vein of cheerfulness, for his singularly varied and vivid landscapes, for his power of painting women at once ladylike and loving,

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(a rare talent) for making lovers to match, at once beautiful and well-bred, and for the solace which all this has afforded me, sometimes over and over again in illness and in convalescence, when I required interest without violence, and entertainment at once animated and mild."

Allan Cunningham, in his *Biographical and Critical History of the Literature of the Last Fifty Years* (1833) refers to his excellent taste, extensive knowledge of history, right feeling of the chivalrous, and heroic and ready eye for the picturesque, adding that his proprieties are admirable and his sympathy with whatever is high-souled and noble, deep and impressive. Cunningham was on terms of intimacy with him, as a number of letters from James addressed to him abundantly prove. The *Edinburgh Review* estimated highly his abilities as a romance-writer, declaring that his works were lively and interesting, and animated by a spirit of sound and healthy morality in feeling and of natural deliberation in character which should secure for them a calm popularity which would "last beyond the present day."

He was not regarded so favorably by the *London Athenæum*, which said of him: "The

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first and most obvious contrivance for the attainment of quantity, is, of course, dilution; but this recourse has practically its limit, and Mr. James had reached it long ago. Common-place in its best day, anything more feeble, vapid—*sloppy* in fact, (for we know not how to characterize this writer's style but by some of its own elegancies)—than Mr. James's manner has become, it were difficult to imagine. Every literary grace has been swamped in the spreading marasmus of his style." ¹

The bewildered reader of reviews is often at a loss to reconcile the censure of one and the praise of another; and it was not very long before the appearance of this slashing article that the *Dublin University Magazine* had thus expressed its opinions: "His pen is prolific enough to keep the imagination constantly nourished; and of him, more than of any modern writer, it may be said, that he has improved his style by the mere dint of constant and abundant practice. For, although so agreeable a novelist, it must not be forgotten that he stands infinitely higher as an historian. * * * The most fantastic and beautiful coruscations which the skies can exhibit to

¹ London *Athenæum*, April 11, 1846.

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the eyes of mankind dart as if in play from the huge volumes that roll out from the crater of the volcano. * * * The recreation of an enlarged intellect is ever more valuable than the highest efforts of a confined one. Hence we find in the works before us, lightly as they have been thrown off, the traces of study—the footsteps of a powerful and vigorous understanding."¹ The works were *Corse de Leon*, *The Ancient Regime*, and *The Jacquerie*—none of them as deserving as *Richelieu*, *Henry Masterton*, or *Mary of Burgundy*. James was a member of the *Dublin* staff and his friend Lever may have inspired the compliments.

One more review may be noticed. Mr. E. P. Whipple, whose criticisms have not become immortal, evidently disapproved of James, and did not hesitate to say so. It is the old charge of sameness and over-production. Whipple scored James in the *North American Review* of April, 1844.

"He is a most scientific expositor of the fact that a man may be a maker of books without being a maker of thoughts; that he may be the reputed author of a hundred volumes and flood the market with his literary wares, and

¹ *Dublin University Magazine*, March, 1842.

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yet have very few ideas and principles for his stock in trade. For the last ten years he has been repeating his own repetitions and echoing his own echoes. His first novel was a shot that went through the target, and he has ever since been assiduously firing through the hole.

* * * When a man has little or nothing to say, he should say it in the smallest space. He should not, at any rate, take up more room than suffices for a creative mind. He should not provoke hostility and petulance by the effrontery of his demands upon time and patience. He should let us off with a few volumes, and gain our gratitude for his benevolence, if not our praise for his talents."¹

Whipple's *critiques* are far more obsolete than James's novels; and a good deal of what he says of James is fairly applicable to his own essays. Even Whipple concedes the excellence of *Richelieu*, notwithstanding the fact that it did not emanate from New England.

Back in the forties there was a magazine, published in Philadelphia, known as *Graham's American Monthly Magazine*, in which the chief American writers of the day, including Poe, Bryant, Cooper, Longfellow, Willis, and

¹ *Essays and Reviews*, II., 116, 137.

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Lowell occasionally figured as contributors. It had its page of reviews and in the number of November, 1848, it enlightened its readers with a disquisition on "Vanity Fair; by W. M. *Thackerway*" [sic], beginning "This is one of the most striking novels of the season." If Lamb could only have met that reviewer, he surely would have danced about, as on another memorable occasion, singing "diddle, diddle dumpling, my son John" and endeavored to examine the reviewer's bumps. *Graham* (November, 1844) was very severe with poor James, in a notice of *Arrah Neil*. The reviewer says: "In our opinion, there is hardly an instance on record of an author who has contrived to earn an extensive reputation as a writer of works of imagination, with such slender intellectual materials as Mr. James. No one has ever written so many books, purporting to be novels, with so small a stock of heart, brain, and invention. He is continually infringing his own copyright, by reproducing his own novels. Far from being surprised that he has written so much, we are astonished that he has not written more. From his first novel, all the rest can be logically deduced; and the reason that they have not appeared faster, may be found in the fact that

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he has been economical in the employment of amanuenses." More of this kind of talk is indulged in without a single word about the book itself or its merits; which proves quite clearly that the reviewer was merely following the path marked out by some other critic, and there is no evidence whatever that he had ever read the work he was reviewing. Thus it is to-day; a parrot-cry of "diffuseness, dilution, re-copying, repetition,"—so easy to proclaim, so difficult to answer, all born of the disposition of newspaper and magazine critics to accept the view which needs no exercise of brains to approve and to announce. It is not without significance that when James was in America, he was a contributor to this same magazine which had scored him so unmercifully; for example, in the volume for 1851 I find two stories by him—*Christian Lacy, a Tale of the Salem Witchcraft*, and *Justinian and Theodora*, as well as a rather graceful sonnet to Jenny Lind.

James C. Derby mentions the fact that James was a friend of Philip Pendleton Cooke, the Virginian poet, and relates that Thackeray visited James when in the South, but that James "resented the latter's [Thackeray's] flings at him as a 'solitary horseman,'" the mean-

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ing of which those who have read James's novels will understand. James once told Cooke of his intention to write his own memoirs—a purpose never fulfilled. Incidentally, he told Cooke a story of Washington Irving, his early adviser, who amiably approved of his earliest essays in literature. It seems that James was in Bordeaux, and after strolling all day, returned to his inn. On his way through a long, dark passage he saw some one in front carrying a candle, a man in black slowly ascending the old-fashioned staircase. On the landing the man stopped, and holding up his candle looked at a cat lying on the windowsill, regarding the gazer with a surprised and frightened expression. The stranger in black looked at the cat for some time mutely and then muttered sadly, "Ah, pussy, pussy! If you had seen as much trouble as I have, you would not be surprised at anything." After which he went on up the stairs, said James, "and as I heard that Irving was in Bordeaux, I said to myself: 'That can be nobody in the world but Irving,' which turned out to be a fact."¹

Frederick Locker-Lampson visited Walter

¹ Derby's *Fifty Years Among Authors, etc.*, 405.

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Savage Landor at Fiesole in the early sixties, and found him reading a Waverly novel. Lampson congratulated the old poet on having so pleasant a companion in his retirement, and Landor, with a winning dignity, replied: "Yes, and there is another novelist whom I equally admire, my old friend [G. P. R.] James."¹ Locker-Lampson does not seem to have shared Landor's appreciation of James. He says, later in his memoirs: "It is a law of literature that every generation should be industrious in burying its own, especially novels. What has become of Smollett and Mackenzie—the cockpit of the 'Thunder' or the sentimental Harley? Where is the shadowy Mr. G. P. R. James and where is that witty old ghost of the Silver Fork school, Mrs. Gore? * * * Yet they all had vogue."² It is odd that almost every one, in speaking of James, recites his numerous initials and bestows upon him the title of "Mr." which carries with it the implication of a sneer.

In my small collection of Gladstone letters I find one addressed to James which shows not only that the statesman liked the books but

¹ *My Confidences*, 161.

² *My Confidences*, 533, 534.

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that he and the author were on terms of some intimacy.

Whitehall, May 17, '43.

My Dear Sir: I thank you very much for your renewed kindness. The perusal of your last work gave me very great pleasure, most of all (though that is but a very slender testimony in their favour) Evesham and Simon de Montfort, of whom I never had before an adequate conception. It is true I am adopted into the Cabinet, & will I fear be alleged as a proof of its poverty. In point of form I cannot succeed Lord Ripon until the Queen holds a Council.¹ The true and whole secret of the difficulty about Canada corn (and I do not mean that we can wonder at it) is, as I believe, that wheat, without great abundance, is at 46/ a quarter.

I remain, my dear sir,

Yours faithfully & obliged,

W. E. Gladstone.

G. P. R. James, Esq.,

The Shrubbery, Walmer.

Donald G. Mitchell, describing the little red cottage of Hawthorne, in the Berkshire hills,

¹ Mr. Gladstone succeeded Lord Ripon as President of the Board of Trade and took his seat in the Cabinet on May 19, 1843.

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reminds us that among those who used to come a-visiting the great American romancer, was "G. P. R. James, that kindly master of knights 'in gay caparison;'" and elsewhere says that at the Cooper Memorial meeting in Metropolitan Hall, on February 25, 1852, where Webster, Bryant and Hawks paid their tribute to the author of the *Leatherstocking* tales, "Mr. G. P. R. James—then chancing to be a visitor in New York—lent a little of his rambling heroics to the interest of the occasion."¹ I have before me the *Memorial*, printed by Putnam in 1852, containing a full report of the meeting, including the remarks of James, and I do not find anything which may fairly be called "heroics," rambling or otherwise. The speech was manifestly extemporaneous. He began by expressing his pride in being an Englishman, a romance writer, and a man of the people, and his pleasure in paying an humble tribute to an American romance-writer and a man of the people. He praised the addresses of those who preceded him, corrected a trifling error of Bryant's in regard to a Mr. James, a surgeon, and declared that the proposed statue to Cooper was not merely to

¹ *American Lands and Letters*, II., 252.

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a novelist, but to a genius—to truth—to truth, genius and patriotism combined. He closed by urging all present to use every exertion to procure contributions for the purpose of erecting such a statue. To any unprejudiced mind, what James said was appropriate and dignified; well suited to the occasion; wholly natural and unaffected; and compared favorably, to say the least, with the dull and ponderous commonplaces of Daniel Webster who had the chair and who was singularly unfitted to preside over such a meeting. Of Webster's platitudes, Professor Lounsbury is quite contemptuous, remarking that the distinguished orator "had nothing to say and said it wretchedly."¹ I believe that the projected statue was never built. James was evidently a favorite dinner-speaker. It is pleasant to know that he spoke at a 'printer's banquet' in New York in the latter part of 1850, and that he paid a well-merited tribute to a man destined to become a distinguished figure in literature. Bayard Taylor, writing to his friend George H. Boker, on January 1, 1851, says: "By the bye, James paid me a very elegant compliment, in his speech at the 'printer's banquet'

¹ Life of Cooper, 268.

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the other night, referring to me as the best landscape painter in words that he had ever known. This is something from an Englishman."¹ He always said kind and appreciative words about his fellow-authors, if they were deserving.

Returning to the Hawthorne cottage, Julian Hawthorne gives a brief account of one of the visits of James, who, it appears, was living near by during the summer of 1851. As the narrator was five years old at the time of this visit, his estimate of the visitors must have been founded upon something other than his personal observation. He says:

"James was a commonplace, meritorious person, with much blameless and intelligent conversation, but the only thing that recalls him personally to my memory is the fact of his being associated with a furious thunder-storm."

He relates how the storm raged and how the door burst open,—his father and he were alone in the cottage—

"and behold! of all persons in the world—to be heralded by such circumstances—G. P. R. James! Not he only, but close upon his heels

¹ *Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor*, I., 203.

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his entire family, numerous, orthodox, admirable, and infinitely undesirable to two secluded gentlemen without a wife and mother to help them out. * * * They dripped on the carpet, they were conventional and courteous; we made conversation between us but whenever the thunder rolled, Mrs. James became ghastly pale. Mr. James explained that this was his birthday, and that they were on a pleasure excursion. He conciliated me by anecdotes of a pet magpie, or raven, who stole spoons. At last the thunderstorm and the G. P. R. Jameses passed off together."¹

It is not uninteresting to compare this rather patronizing and supercilious narration of a trivial incident with that which is given in his own Journal by the father of this precocious young gentleman of five years; and it is probably the fact that the story was related by the son not from his own memory but from the record of the Journal, reproduced in "Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife," by Julian Hawthorne.² Nathaniel Hawthorne evidently liked James. Under date of July 30, 1851, he says: "We walked to the village for the mail, and

¹ Hawthorne and his Circle, 33, 34.

² Vol. I., 422, 423.

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on our way back we met a wagon in which sat Mr. G. P. R. James, his wife and daughter, who had just left their cards at our house. Here ensued a talk, quite pleasant and friendly. He is certainly an excellent man; and his wife is a plain, good, friendly, kind-hearted woman, and his daughter a nice girl. Mr. James spoke of 'The House of the Seven Gables' and of 'Twice-Told Tales,' and then branched off upon English literature generally.¹ The acquaintance between the two authors must have been deemed to be of advantage to both, for the supercilious Master Julian takes care to present in full a note of invitation addressed by James to the elder Hawthorne asking the latter "with his two young people" to visit him, saying: "We are going to have a little haymaking after the olden fashion, and a syllabub under the cow; hoping not to be disturbed by any of your grim old Puritans, as were the poor folks of Merrymount. By the way, you do not do yourself justice at all in your preface to the 'Twice-Told Tales,'—but more on that subject anon."²

Under the date of August 9, 1851, Haw-

¹ Hawthorne and his Wife, I., 415.

² *Id.* 397, 398.

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thorne gives his own version of the thunder-storm episode, in marked contrast with the condescending remarks of his hopeful son. It reveals the difference between parent and child.

"The rain was pouring down," says Hawthorne senior, "and from all the hillsides mists were steaming up, and Monument Mountain seemed to be enveloped as if in the smoke of a great battle. During one of the heaviest showers of the day there was a succession of thundering knocks at the front door. On opening it, there was a young man on the doorstep, and a carriage at the gate, and Mr. James thrusting his head out of the carriage window, and beseeching shelter from the storm! So here was an invasion. Mr. and Mrs. James, their eldest son, their daughter, their little son Charles, their maid-servant, and their coachman;—not that the coachman came in; and as for the maid, she stayed in the hall.¹ Dear me! where was Phoebe in this time of need? All taken aback as I was, I made the best of it. Julian helped me somewhat, but not much, Little Charley is a few months younger than he, and between them they at least furnished

¹ A little bit snobbish for a Hawthorne, is it not?

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subject for remark. Mrs. James, luckily, happened to be very much afraid of thunder and lightning; and as these were loud and sharp, she might be considered *hors de combat*. The son, who seemed to be about twenty, and the daughter, of seventeen or eighteen, took the part of saying nothing, which I suppose is the English fashion as regards such striplings. So Mr. James was the only one to whom it was necessary to talk, and we got along tolerably well. He said that this was his birthday, and that he was keeping it by a pleasure excursion, and that therefore the rain was a matter of course.¹ We talked of periodicals, English and American, and of the Puritans, about whom we agreed pretty well in our opinions; and Mr. James told how he had recently been thrown out of his wagon, and how the horse ran away with Mrs. James; and we talked about green lizards and red ones. And Mr. James told Julian how, when he was a child, he had twelve owls at the same time; and, at another time, a raven, who used to steal silver spoons and money. He also mentioned a squirrel, and several other pets; and Julian laughed most obstreperously. As to little

¹ Observe how Mr. Julian Hawthorne wholly omits the point of the observation about the pleasure excursion.

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Charles, he was much interested with Bunny (who had been returned to us from the Tappans, somewhat the worse for wear), and likewise with the rocking-horse, which luckily happened to be in the sitting-room. He examined the horse most critically, and finally got upon his back, but did not show himself quite as good a rider as Julian. Our old boy hardly said a word. Finally the shower passed over, and the invaders passed away; and I do hope that on the next occasion of the kind my wife will be there to see." ¹

I give the story in full, not only because of its relation to James and his family, but for its revelation of Hawthorne himself; the little touch of parental pride is amusing as well as affecting. What Nathaniel Hawthorne thought of James in those days is far more important than what Julian Hawthorne thinks of him now.

Mr. Charles L. James writes to me:

"Yes, I have read Hawthorne's account of our visit in a thunderstorm; and what is more, I remember the occurrence. I was little Charley, whom he mentions. I remember not only getting upon Julian's rocking-horse, but pull-

¹ Life of Hawthorne and his Wife, I., 422, 424.

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ing out his tail and being aghast at what I had done, for I did not possess a wooden horse and it had not occurred to me that the tail was movable."

I am glad that Charles pulled out that tail; perhaps the memory of the outrage inspired the owner of the steed when he wrote his little story.

Longfellow regarded James with a degree of kindness and esteem quite comparable to that with which Hawthorne looked upon him. In his Journal for September 17, 1850, he says, after mentioning several visitors: "Then Fields, with G. P. R. James, the novelist, and his son. He is a sturdy man, fluent and rapid, and looking quite capable of fifty more novels."¹ Later, on November 17, he says: "James, the novelist, came out to dinner with Sumner. He is a manly, middle-aged man, *tirant sur le grison*, as Lafontaine has it, with a gray mustache; very frank, off-hand, and agreeable. In politics he is a Tory, and very conservative."² James certainly had no reason to complain of his reception by the best of our own literary men of that day.

¹ Life of H. W. Longfellow, by Stephen Longfellow, II., 177.

² *Id.* 182.

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It is an evidence of the fact that James was admired and his ability appreciated by other authors, that he was suspected by no less a person than William Harrison Ainsworth of being the writer of *Jane Eyre*. I have before me an autograph letter from Ainsworth to James (November 14, 1849,) in which he says: "Anything I can do for you at any time you know you may command, and I shall only be too happy in the opportunity of making kindly mention in the N. M. M. of your Dark Scenes of History. The times are not propitious to us veterans and literature generally has within the last two years suffered a tremendous depreciation. * * * Do you know I took it into my head that you were the author of 'Jane Eyre,' but I have altered my opinion since I read a portion of 'Shirley.' Currer Bell, whoever he or she may be, has certainly got some of your 'trick' * * * but 'Shirley' has again perplexed me."

For some reason, no doubt an insignificant one, I have never been able to bring myself to the belief that Robert Louis Stevenson deserves the worship which many sane people appear to accord to him. He had a style, of course, but not such a wonderful style as we are advised by numbers of solemn critics. I

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am disposed to be indulgent towards him because of his modified fondness for James, which is expressed in a letter written by him from Saranac, February, 1888, to E. L. Burlingame. He says:¹

"Will you send me (from the library) some of the works of my dear old G. P. R. James? With the following especially I desire to make or to renew acquaintance: *The Songster*, *The Gipsey*, *The Convict*, *The Stepmother*, *The Gentleman of the Old School*, *The Robber*. *Excusez du peu*. This sudden return to an ancient favourite hangs upon an accident. The Franklin County Library contains two works of his, *The Cavalier* and *Morley Ernstein*. I read the first with indescribable amusement —it was worse than I had feared, and yet somehow engaging; the second (to my surprise) was better than I had dared to hope; a good, honest, dull, interesting tale, with a genuine old-fashioned talent in the invention when not strained, and a genuine old-fashioned feeling for the English language. This experience awoke appetite, and you see I have taken steps to stay it.

R. L. S."

¹ Letters, II., 111.

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VI.

I have a number of holograph letters of James, some of which show his pleasant ways and attractive playfulness. They constitute the *raison d' etre* of this commentary and so I will not apologize for giving them almost in full. He speaks for himself far better than I can speak for him. He was surely not a Siborne or a Major Dwyer. To my mind these letters reveal the man, and they tell of an honest, genial man who was able to write.

He writes to C. W. H. Ranken, at Bristol, thus:

Rennes, 16 January, 1826.

Rankeno amico caro carissimo:

That unfortunate Gentleman upon whose back all the evils of this world have been laid from time immemorial, I mean the Devil, has certainly (to give him his due) been tormenting my poor friend and schoolfellow pretty handsomely. What with your cough in the first place and your abscess in the second you have been quite a martyr, but remember the martyrs always reach heaven at last and I doubt not that your sufferings will soon be over and that in the little Paradise you have planned for yourself some five or six miles from London (rather a cockney distance by

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the by) you will enjoy the happiness of the blest with those you love best. I think I shall make the same compact with you that I have made with Becknell namely that in after years when time has laid his heavy hand upon us all and when you are happy in your children and your children's children you will still give the crusty old Bachelor a place at your fireside and your Sophia shall furnish me with strong green tea and I will take my pinch of snuff and tell you Grandam's tales to amuse the little ones or recount the wonderful things I have seen in my travels or growl at the degeneracy of the world and praise the good old days when I was young and gay and did many a wondrous deed for "Ladye love and pride of Chivalrie" and you shall forgive many a cross word and ill-tempered remark for old friendship's sake and say "He was not always so but this world's sorrows have soured his temper poor old Man."

You tell me to continue my history of Bretagne, but in sooth I know not where I left off. Memory, that lazy slut, has forgot to mend her pocket which has had a hole in it for some time and the consequence is that, of all I give her to keep for me, the dross alone remains and the better part is dropped by the

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wayside. But I am not at all in the mood to give any descriptions. I am philosophical and therefore will tell you a story.

In that mighty empire which exceeds all others as much in wisdom as it does in size—in the time of Fo Whang, who was the six hundredth emperor of the ninety-seventh dynasty which has sat on the throne of Cathay, there lived a philosopher whose doctrine was such that every Chinese from the mandarin who enjoys the light of the celestial presence to the waterman who paddles his Junk in the river of Canton became proselytes.

Every one knows that every Chinese from generation to generation is in manners, customs, dress, and appearance so precisely what his father was before him that a certain Mandarin who had thought proper to fall into a trance for a century or so, waking from his sleep and entering his paternal mansion, found his great grandson, who was at dinner, so strikingly like himself that he was struck dumb with astonishment. There were the same wide thin eye-brows, there were the same beautiful black eyes no bigger than peas, there was the same delicate tea-colored complexion. He wore the same silk his ancestor had worn and the same chopsticks carried his food to his

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mouth. The Great Grandson instantly recognised his predecessor, but the resuscitated Mandarin, forgetting the lapse of years, mistook his descendant for his own grandfather and each casting themselves on their belly wriggled towards each other with all symptoms of respect. Such being the laudable reverence of this people for all customs sanctified by time, it may be well supposed that that doctrine was magnificent which could take a Chinese by the ear, and such indeed was the doctrine of the Philosopher, namely, that wisdom is folly and folly is wisdom. Which he proved thus: "The end of wisdom" said the Philosopher, "is to be happy. And the fewer are our wants the fewer can be our disappointments and consequently the happier we are. The fool has fewer wants than the wise man and the ignorant less wishes than the learned, and therefore the fool being the happiest is the wisest and the wise man is but a fool." Now the wise men (even in China) being lamentably in the minority the Philosopher had all the voices for himself. Now there was a young Man named To-hi, who never pretended to be a wise man but was nevertheless not a fool, and going to the Philosopher he said to him—"Father I cannot help thinking

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that your doctrine means more than it appears to mean and I think I have found its explication." "Speak freely, my Son" replied the Philosopher, "and tell me what you suppose it to be." "I imagine," said To-hi, "that you wish to inculcate that Men seek for wisdom above their power and destroy their happiness by examining too near the objects which produce it. For I remark that all that is beautiful in nature as well as in life is little better than a delusion which to be enjoyed must be seen from a distance. When I look at the hills of Tartary, they seem from here grand and soft and blue and changing all sorts of colors from the reflection of the Sun, but when I approach them I find nothing but heaps of barren rocks and frightful deserts. If we regard the finest skin with a magnifying glass, it is like coarsest cloth of Surat and the sunset that we admire for its soft splendor to the nations on the edge of the horizon is but the glare of midday. Thus then we ought to enjoy whatever the world offers us without searching for faults and be as happy as we can without seeking to be too wise. Is not this what you meant?" "My Son," replied the Philosopher "like many other Philosophers I did not well know what I meant and you, like many other commenta-

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tors, have given an explanation which the author never intended."

Rennes, first of Feby.

As you will see, my Dear Ranken, this letter has been written half a century but I have been wandering about the country and forgot to finish it before I went. Long before this however I hope you are fundamentally cured and prepared to set up on your own bottom. Doubtless you will find a vast fund of nonsense in the former part of this 'pistle but if it serves to give you a minute's amusement it will answer the object of

Yours sincerely

G. P. R. James

Everybody seems to have written affectionately to Charles Ollier, the publisher—Lamb, Hunt, Keats, Shelley, and a host of others. His son, Edmund, "beheld Charles Lamb with infantile eyes and sat in poor Mary Lamb's lap."¹ James writes to the elder Ollier, from the Chateau du Buisson, Garumbourg, *pres* Evreux, on August 7, 1829:

¹ Charles Ollier, 1788-1859.

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My Dear Mr. Ollier.

I take advantage of a friend's departure for London, to write to you though I have nothing to say. I have done as much of my new book as I permit myself to do per diem and having nothing else to do my vile *cacoethes scribendi* prompts me to indite this epistle to your manifest trouble and annoyance. My father informs me you have been ill and calls your complaint "nothing but Dis-pep-sia." I hope and trust however that you have no such long word in your stomach, but if you have, nothing can be so good for it as crossing the water and visiting a friend in France. One of my visitors lately brought me over about twenty newspapers and also the information that my unfortunate *Adra* had never made her appearance. Incontinent, I fell into one of my accustomed fits of passion which was greatly increased by finding that in none of the twenty journals was any advertisement or mention whatever of *Richelieu* which together with the news that about four and twenty people had asked for *Richelieu* and could not get it in England, Scotland or Ireland, made me write instantly to Mr. Bentley a very flaming letter about printing *Adra &c. &c. &c.* I had written to Mr. Colburn sometime ago without his

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doing me the *honor* to answer me, and therefore I write not there again. I have since received an answer from Mr. R. Bentley and all has gone right. But I am most profanely ignorant of all news and therefore will beg you to answer me the following Qys. if you can.

Has *Richelieu* been reviewed in the New Monthly? Has it ever been advertised? Does the sale proceed as successfully as when I left London? Will you see that its first success does not make Mr. Colburn relax in his efforts in its favor? Will you manage the reviewing of *Adra* and take care that it be sent to and noticed by as many publications as possible? Will you see that the list of persons to whom I desired it to be sent and which I left in Burlington street be attended to? Will you let me know whether there be anything in which I can in any way serve or pleasure you? I am sincere and ever yours.

G. P. R. James.

This letter dated at Maxpoffle, near Melrose, Roxburghshire, 14th June 1832, is addressed to Allan Cunningham.

My Dear Sir:

When you were in this country last year, I told you not to forget me; and you promised that you would not; yet I doubt not that when

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you see the signature to this, memory will have much ado to call up the person who writes. Nevertheless I cannot forbear—even at the distance of time which has since elapsed, and the distance of space which intervenes—from telling you how much delighted I have been with your Maid of Elnar. I have not seen the whole but various passages in various reviews, have shown me so much surpassing beauty, that I do not wait even till I have been delighted with the whole, to tell you how great has been the pleasure I have felt from a part.

I do not know very well how or why, but I have been lately sickening of poetry; and though once as great a dreamer as ever felt the sweet music of imagination in his heart of hearts, within the last four or five years I have found it all flat, stale, and unprofitable; and began to fancy myself a devout adorer of dull prose. I thank you then for showing me that there is still such a thing as poetry; and it would not at all surprise me to feel myself—after reading the Maid of Elnar through—taking the top of the wave, and going over every poet again from Chaucer to Byron. Can you tell me what it is that causes such a strange revolution in tastes? I declare for the last five

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years since the Byron mania was upon me, I have looked upon poetry as the most sappy, senseless misapplication of good words, that ever the whimsical folly of the universal fool, mankind, devised. A spark or two of the old faggot was rekindled in my heart about six weeks ago, by hearing a sonnet of Wordsworth's read aloud; and that I believe induced me to read the extracts from your book; and now I am all ablaze. What I like in the various scattered passages of the Maid of Elnar, would be endless to tell without writing a review; but there is something throughout the whole which has enchanted me—a mingling of the fine spirit of old chivalry, with the sweet home feeling of calm happy nature that is something newer than even Spenser. As Oliver Cromwell used to say, I would say something—Ay verily—but I won't for fear you should think me exaggerating and therefore I will bid you farewell. It is natural of course for me to hate you; for every author is bound to detest any other person who writes what is good. I would therefore fain pay you that compliment, but your book will not let me; and I must beg you to believe me

Ever yours most truly

G. P. R. James.

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I send this to your Bookseller, because I do not know where else to send it; and I pay it, because many a good wholesome letter which has been addressed to the care of mine, has never reached me for want of that precaution on the part of my correspondents. Before the letter reaches you, I shall have got and read the whole book; and by heaven, if the rest does not come up to the extracts, I shall either lampoon you or your critics.

Another letter to Cunningham follows:

Maxpoffle near Melrose Roxburghshire
17th May 1833.

My Dear Friend:

To show you how little the fault that you notice is attributable to myself, I have only to tell you that I could not get a copy of *Mary of Burgundy* till three days after you had received it and my sister-in-law writes to Mrs. James, by the post that brought your letter, that although she had ordered the book through her own bookseller, she has not yet been able to get it, while friends of hers have obtained it at the circulating libraries. Not having lived in London for many years, I am quite unacquainted with all the ins and

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outs of these affairs and do not even know who is the Editor of the *Athenaeum*; but I think it somewhat hard measure on his part to make an author pay for the sins of his Bookseller and very different indeed from the usual liberal spirit that I have seen in his paper.

However, I never courted a Journalist in my life and although I know that I have suffered greatly on this account, yet I shall pursue the same plan; and only by endeavoring to make my works better than they have been, force all honest writers to give them their due share whatever it may be. At the same time I will endeavour as far as in me lies to prevent any such instances of neglect as those of which you complain taking place for the future, especially in regard to a paper which deserves so well of the public. Having done so, whatever be the result the Editor must "tak his wull o't, as the cat did o' the haggis." I never reply to criticism unless it be very absurd which is not likely to be the case with his; so let him "pour on, I will endure."

In regard to the *String of Pearls* I not only begged a copy to be sent to you before any one else; I wrote you a long letter to be sent with it; but this is only one out of the many

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shameful pieces of negligence which Mr. Bentley has shown in my affairs.

I trust that the Editor of the *Athenaeum* got a copy of *Mary of Burgundy* independent of that sent to you for I wish it clearly to be understood that I send you my leather and pru-nella, as a man for whom I have a high admiration and esteem, and not at all as a critic. When you get them, review them yourself, let others review, praise, abuse them, or let others abuse them as you find need; but still receive them as a mark of regard from me; and be sure that nothing you can say of them will diminish that regard. Whenever I have any one of them for which I wish a little lenity I will write you a note with it and tax your friendship upon the occasion; but still exculpate me in your own generous mind and plead my exculpation to others, of all intriguing to gain undue celebrity for my works or of dabbling with literary coteries. I give in to my bookseller a list of my friends—amongst whom your name stands high and I leave all the rest to him. For the *String of Pearls* I was anxious both because it was given to a charity and because I was afraid the Publisher might lose by it; but this as far as I can remember is the only book for which I ever asked a review.

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Thanks however, many thanks, for your critique in the Athenaeum which is calculated to do my book much good and is much more favorable than it deserves. Of your light censure I will speak to you when we meet which I am happy to say will be soon—at least I trust soon. On the twenty-eighth we leave this place for London on our way to Germany and Italy. My liver and stomach have become so deranged of late that I find it necessary to put myself under the hands of a physician whose prescription is an agreeable one. "Take the waters of Ems for two seasons and spend the intermediate time in travelling through Italy." This plan I am about to pursue, and in our way we shall spend a month in London when I will find you out.

The country round us is lovely at present. After a cold lingering spring, summer has set in, in all its radiance and the world has burst at once into green beauty. You cannot fancy how lovely the Cheviots looked yesterday evening, as Mrs. James and I rode over the shoulder of the Eildons. The sky was full of the broken fragments of a past thunder storm and the lights and shadows were soft, superb and dreamlike. I know I may rave about beautiful scenery to you without fear or compunc-

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tion for the Maid of Elnar made me know that you love it as well as

My Dear Allan,

Ever yours truly,

G. P. R. James.

P. S.—I have not yet got your last volume but if it be as good as its predecessors you will have no occasion to whip your Genius.

Allan Cunningham, Esqre.,

Belgrave Place, Pimlico,

London.

He writes again to Cunningham:

10 July, 1835.

1 Lloyds Place, Blackheath.

My Dear Friend:

A thousand thanks for your kind letter and all the kind things it contains. I am glad that you like my friend the Gipsey, because your approval is worth much and though I think it tolerable myself, yet I have attributed a great part of its success to the name. In answer to the question you put, I do not think he was drowned; but I do not know with certainty. I have told all I do know and farther this deponent sayeth not. I have long been thinking of writing to you to tell you that the name of

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Chaucer appears in the Scroop and Grosvenor roll in the year 1386 but all that I dare say you know. The best sketch of the real events of Chaucer's life is certainly that in Sir H. Nicholas' comments on that roll, Vol. II., page 404, wherein he probably states all that can be learned with certainty of his life and proceedings. I tell you all this, although I dare say you are already acquainted with it because you asked me if I found any thing concerning our poet to let you know. *The Black Prince* comes on but slowly. So much examination and research is necessary that it is a most laborious and very expensive work. It has already cost me in journeys, transcriptions, books, MSS., &c., many hundred pounds without at all calculating my individual labour and do you know, my dear Allan, what I expect as my reward. Clear loss; and two or three reviews written by ignorant blockheads upon a subject they do not understand, for the purpose of damning a work which throws some new light upon English History. I am very much out of spirits in regard to historical literature and though I would willingly devote my time and even my money to elucidate the dark points of our own history yet encouragement from the public is small and from the Govern-

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ment does not exist, so that I lay down the pen in despair of ever seeing English history any thing but what it is—a farago of falsehoods and hypotheses covered over with the tinsel of specious reasoning from wrong data. And so you tell Lord Melbourne when you see him. But to speak of a personage, you are more likely to see namely Mr. Chantry. There is a bust which I wish him very much to see and wish you would take a look at it first as I have not seen the original myself. I have a cast of it given me by my Banker at Florence, to whom the original belongs, and if the head be equal to the cast it is the most beautiful antique I have ever seen. It is to be seen at Mr. Brown's in University Street, Gower Street *marble works*. Ask to see the antique head belonging to Mr. Johnstone and write me but three lines to tell me what you think of it. He paid, I believe, two hundred pounds for it and would take I believe three or four. If it be as I think, it (pedestal and all) is worth double.

Yours ever with best Compliments to your family

G. P. R. James.

Excuse a scrawl but I am not very well.

GEORGE PAYNE RAINSFORD JAMES

1 Lloyds Place, Blackheath
5th Decr 1835

My Dear Allan:

I have sent you a book and have ten times the pleasure in sending you one now that ever I had, because I hear you have detached yourself from all reviews. Heaven be praised therefor; for now you can sit down quietly by your own ingle work and pick out all that is good—if there be any—in my One in a Thousand and palate it all, without the prospect, the damning prospect, of a broad sheet and small print before your eyes, and without wracking your honest brain to find out any small glimmerings of wit and wisdom in your friend's book in order to set it forth as fairly as may be to the carp-ing world.

By the way, I thought you were honest and true; and yet you have deceived me wofully. You promised to come down to Blackheath and you have not appeared. I have been writing night and day or I should have presented myself to call you to account. Will you come down even yet, and take a family dinner with me? Any Sunday at five you will be sure to find me but if you come on another day, let me have a day's notice by

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post, lest I be engaged, which would be a great disappointment to

Yours ever truly,

G. P. R. James.

He always wrote frankly and freely to Cunningham. This letter deals with *Attila*.

The Cottage, Great Marlow, Bucks,
15th April 1837

My Dear Allan:

Many thanks for your letter and kind words upon *Attila*. I do believe that he is a good fellow, at all events he is very successful in society and though there are not as you well know twenty people in London who know who Attila was, he is as well received, I understand, as if he had the entree. Conjectures as to who Attila was are various in the well informed circles of the Metropolis, and ever since the book was advertised two principal opinions have prevailed, some people maintaining that He, Attila, was Hettman of the Cossacks and was succeeded by Platoff; others asserting that he was a Lady, first cousin to Boru the Backwoodsman, and the heroine of a romance by Chateaubriand. This may look like a joke, but I can assure you, it is a fact

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and that out of one hundred people of the highest rank in Europe you will not find five who know who Attila was; setting aside the groveling animals who, as the Duke of Somerset says, *addict* themselves to Literature.

I am very sorry to hear you say that these well informed and enlightened times have not done justice to your romances. I'll tell you one great fault they have, which is probably that which prevents the world from liking them as much as it should do: they have too much poetry in them, Allan, one and all from *Michael Scott* to *Lord Roldan*. But you must not expect to succeed in all walks of art. You are a lyric poet and a biographer; how can you expect that the critics would ever let you come near romances. No, no; they feel it their bounden duty to smother all such efforts of your genius and they fulfil that duty with laudable zeal. Did you see how the Atheneum attempted to dribble its small beer venom upon *Attila*. If you have not, read that sweet and grammatical [*sic*] article, when you will find that because a man has succeeded in one style of writing he cannot succeed in another, and apply the critics dictum to yourself. One half of this world is made up of idiocy, insanity, humbug, and

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peculation, and the other half (very nearly) of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

Yours ever truly,

G. P. R. James.

This letter is directed to "Charles Ollier, Esq., Richard Bentley, Esq., New Burlington Street, London."

Fair Oak Lodge, Petersfield,
Hants, 25th December, 1837.

My Dear Ollier:

Mr. Bentley I think usually gives me six copies of a work such as *Louis XIV*. I have already had one copy of the first two volumes for the Duke of Sussex, and you will very much oblige me by having the copies sent to the following persons with my compliments written in the front leaf and dated Fair Oak Lodge, Petersfield: Lord John Russell, Wilton Crescent; S. M. Phillipps, Esq., Home Office; The Marquis Conyngham, Dudley House, Park Lane; The Lady Polwarth, 9 John Street, Berkeley Square; and also one to G. P. R. James, Fair Oak Lodge, which will make the six copies. I must also have another copy sent to my friend Seymour as soon as you can, addressed as follows: "Sir G. Hamilton Seymour,

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G. C. H. Brussels, In the care of the Under Secretary of State F. O. Downing Street." For this last I will pay as soon as you let me know what is the price. Mr. Bentley charges me for the copy; I should like it to be accompanied by a copy of *Henry Masterton*, the small edition of which by the [way] I have not received any copies and should like some. Pray let me know what Mr. B. charges *me* for Louis per copy as there are several other friends to whom I should like to give it, but as Sancho would say I must not stretch my feet beyond the length of my sheet.

Yours ever,

G. P. R. James.

P. S.—I am anxious to get on with the two last volumes, but I suppose it is the merry season which prevents my having any proofs as yet.

A letter to Alaric Watts refers to the Boundary Question pamphlet:

Fair Oak Lodge, Petersfield, Hants,
9th April, 1839

My Dear Watts:

I write you ten lines in the greatest bustle that ever man was in to tell you that the death of poor Sir Charles Paget turns me out of my

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house. This is not of necessity indeed, for I have a lease of it for some time yet unexpired, but Lady Paget sent to ask if I would let her come in again and I felt not in my heart to refuse the widow under such circumstances. I go before the first of May, but I do sincerely wish that between this and then I may have the pleasure of seeing you here. I think that you will believe me to be a sincere man: a tolerably bitter enemy as long as I think there is cause for enmity, a very pertinacious friend when I do like. From this place we go to London, or rather to Brompton, Mrs. James's sister who is in town for the winter, having lent her her house there, for a short time. It is called the Hermitage and is nearly opposite Trevor Square, which perhaps you may know. Do not suffer yourself or Mrs. Watts to fancy that it will put us to any inconvenience to receive you here if you can manage it, as I assure you it will not. I sell all my horses by auction on the 25th and you could help to build them up. After we quit the Hermitage, we have not the slightest idea where we shall go but there at least I trust to see you if you cannot leave your weighty employments ere then. I was delighted with your parthian shots, which were exquisitely truly aimed and

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though the arrows were not poisoned by your hand, the corruption of the flesh in which they have stuck, depend upon it, will produce gangrene. You were made for a reviewer: only you are honest. How was it else that I escaped even when we did not fully understand each other?

I have told the booksellers to send you a little pamphlet on the American Boundary question. It is merely a brief and unpretending summary of the early history of that bone of contention, only worth your looking into as a saving of time.

Pray let me hear from you a few words and believe me with Mrs. James's and my own best Compliments to Mrs. Watts,

Yours ever,

G. P. R. James.

P. S.—I am making a little collection of my works in their new edition for Mrs. Watts's book-case and I send *Richelieu* with this. It is odd Bulwer should have just published a play under the same title when the third edition of mine had been announced for months. I have not seen his, but I should like to compare the two.

Alaric A. Watts, Esqre
Crane Court, Fleet Street.

GEORGE PAYNE RAINSFORD JAMES

2 Verulam Place Hastings
10th January 1840

My Dear Alan:

It is very grievous to me to hear that you have been suffering and it would be as grievous to hear *the how* if I were not quite sure that at your age and with temperance in all things such as yours, the enemy—if so we can venture to call him—will pass away and leave you, perhaps more useful, but not less comfortable for many a long year. Within my own recollection this has happened to many that I still know in health and vigor but while any vestige remains of the disease it always leaves a despondency as its footprint which makes us look upon the attack as worse than it really has been. Though a successful man, I know—I am sure,—you have been an anxious man; and there is nothing has so great a tendency to produce all kinds of nervous affections as anxiety. I trust however that you have now no cause for any kind of anxiety but *that* regarding your health, and that it will soon regain its tone. Pray my good friend take exercise, not of a violent or fatiguing nature, but frequent and tranquilly, and remember that anything which hurries the circulation is very detrimental. You will also find everything

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that sits heavy or cold upon the stomach also bad for you; I know, for I have seen much mischief done by even a small quantity of the cold sorts of fruit. It gives me great pleasure to hear you like my books. You are one of those who can understand and appreciate the plan which I have laid down for myself in writing them. If I chose to hazard thoughts and speculations that might do evil, to run a tilt at virtue and honor, to sport with good feelings and to arouse bad ones, the field being far wider, the materials more ample, I might perhaps be more brilliant and witty, but I would rather build a greek temple or a gothic church than the palace of Versailles with all its frog's statues and marbles. If the books give you entertainment, you are soon likely to have another for there is one now in the press called the "*King's Highway*" but which is not quite so Jack Sheppardish as the name implies. With our best regards to all yours believe me ever

Yours truly,

G. P. R. James.

Allan Cunningham, Esqre
Belgrave Place,
Pimlico.

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I do not know to whom this letter was written:

Hotel de L'Europe, Brussels,
30th July, '40.

My Dear Sir:

The grief and anxiety I have suffered have brought upon me an intermittent fever and various concomitant evils amongst which has been an affection of the face and eyes. Had this not been the case I should have written to you ere I left England, although it has cost me a great effort to write to any one. I am now a good deal better and will immediately correct the proofs I have received; but for the future will you tell Mr. Shaw to send the proofs in as large a mass as possible, addressed as follows and given in to the French diligence office, a Monsieur G. P. James *chez* M: C. A. Fries, Heidelberg en Basle, *aux soins de* Messrs. Eschenauer Cie, Strasburg, Via Paris, *Presse*.

This is a somewhat long address, but if it be not followed and the proofs be sent by Rotterdam I shall never get one half of them till two or three years after, for such was the case with many proofs of *Edwd. the Black Prince*.

Any letter for me you had better direct at once to me "*aux soins de* Sir G. Hamilton Sey-

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mour, G. C. H. Brussels." When I am a little better I will write you a longer letter telling you all our movements and also what progress I have made in my plan for stopping continental piracy; in which if you will give me your assistance and influence I do not despair of succeeding although the Government will do nothing. I have already made some way for I can talk without using my eyes.

Yours ever faithfully,

G. P. R. James.

This letter was written to McGlashan, in Lever's care, at Brussels:

The Shrubbery, Walmer,
2nd August, '41.

My Dear Sir:

I did not write to you as I had full occupation for every minute and of a kind that could not be neglected. The same will be the case for the next three weeks, as I am just concluding a new work which I can of course lay aside for no other undertaking till it is finished. It will give me very great pleasure to see you here on our way back from Brussels and we can talk over the whole of my plan but as to having even one number completed that is

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quite out of the question as in order to accomplish it I should be obliged to lay aside a work which had reached the beginning of the last volume before you made up your mind and to do so would be highly disadvantageous to both books. I can tell you quite sufficient however regarding the first two numbers to answer your views as to illustrations.

Pray give my best wishes to Dr. Lever and tell him that we are all going on well; though for the last fortnight I have had no small anxiety upon my shoulders regarding Mrs. James and the baby.

Believe me to be
Dear Sir
Yours faithfully
G. P. R. James.

On May 17, 1842, he wrote to Mr. Bretton:

* * * * I am very glad you were pleased with what I said at the Literary Fund dinner. I could have said a great deal more upon the same subject and opened my views for the benefit of the arts in this country, including literature of course, as one of the noblest branches of art—but the hour was so late that I made my speech as short as possible and yet

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perhaps it was too long. * * * I think if I can bring the great body of literary men to act with me, especially the much neglected and highly deserving writers for the daily and weekly press, I shall be enabled to open a new prospect for literature. Should you have any oportunity [sic] of hinting that such are my wishes and hopes, pray do: for this is no transient idea, but a fixed and long meditated purpose which, however inadequate may be my own powers to carry it out, may produce great things by the aid of more powerful minds than that of

Yours very faithfully,

G. P. R. James.

The name of the person to whom the following letter was written is not given:

The Oaks nr. Walmer, Kent,
22nd Augt., 1844.

Sir:

I have been either absent from home or unwell since your letter arrived or I should have answered it sooner. I do not exactly understand the sort of use you desire to make of the *Life of Edward the Black Prince* written by myself. Of course I can have no possible

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objection to your making as long quotations from it as you like, or to your grounding your own statements upon those which it contains which I think you may rely upon with full confidence; but if it was your purpose to make the projected Work a mere sort of Abridgement of mine, I am sorry to say I cannot give you the permission you desire, however much I might personally wish to do so, as Messrs. Longman published a Second Edition of it not long ago, a part of which remains unsold and I could not venture, of course to interfere with their sale. They could not of course object to any quotations you might think fit to make or any reasonable use of the facts stated, as I cannot but think that each historian has a full right to employ the information collected by all his predecessors.

I have the honor to be,

Sir

Your most obedt. Servant,

G. P. R. James.

The Shrubbery, Walmer, Kent,

1st June, 1847.

My Dear Worthington:

I received your letter yesterday and would have answered it immediately; but we are in

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the midst of an election business here. I am not a candidate; and, disgusted with public men, had resolved not to take any part on behalf of others; but I have been led on and when once in the business go on, as you know, heart and hand.

Let me hear a little more about the Ecclesiastical History Society. I am a churchman you know, but far from Puseyitical and I should not like to be mixed up with any legends except such as Ehrenstein or any Saints except St. Mary le bonne.

I am glad to hear that you have moved your dwelling; for Pancras was so completely out of my beat that it was impossible for me to get there when in town. Indeed during my visits to that famed city of London I always put myself in mind of an American orator's description of himself when he said "I am a right down regler Steam Engine, I go slick off right ahead and never stop till I get to the tarnation back of nothing at all."

I shall be delighted to see you and Mr. Christmas here any time you can come and will with a great deal of pleasure board and educate you but as to lodging you I am unable for what with babies, nurses, and one thing or another I can hardly lodge myself. I do

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not propose to be in London for some days or I should rather say weeks, as I was there very lately.

As to Marylebone, any body may propose me for any where and I will be the representative of any body of men always provided nevertheless that I do not spend a penny and maintain my own principles to the end of the chapter. I am not yet inscribable in the *dictionnaire des Girouettes*; but I trust soon to be for it seems to me that the Jim Crow system is the only one that succeeds in England.

Believe me with best regards to all your household

Yours truly,

G. P. R. James.

In a letter dated April 1, 1849, and addressed to Mr. Davison, he says:

"I understand you have got a potato. Can you spare half of it, for we have not that. But to speak seriously, which is not my wont, Mrs. James has heard from Mrs. H. that on your farm there are some capital praties, and as we have been languishing for some of the jewels for the last month without being able to get anything edible or digestible, if this rumor of your *riches* is correct, will you spare a sack or

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two to a poor man in want, and what will be the cost of the same, delivered in Farnham safe, sound and in good condition—wind and weather permitting. The truth is I have no horse to send for them; and neither cow nor calf have learned to draw yet. I have had no time to teach them, or to buy a horse either. I wish any one else had half my work and I half of theirs—I'd take it and give a premium."

How busy he was after his arrival in America may be seen from a letter dated October 27, 1850:

"I fear that it would be quite impossible for me to rewrite the first four numbers of the tale you speak of. Applications for lectures have come in so rapidly that I have not one single evening vacant and the evening would be the only time which I could devote to such a purpose as all my mornings must be given up to the fulfilment of my engagements with England and to traveling from place to place. You may easily imagine how much I am occupied when I tell you that during the whole month I am about to stay in Boston, there is not one night which has not its lecture fixed there or at some place in the neighborhood. The delay in London however, of which I

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had not heard till I received your letters is favorable, as it will enable me to get the proofs over in good time. The four parts are in type, I understand, and I have written over two thumping letters to the printers scolding them for not sending the proof as they are bound by contract to do. One of these letters was posted three weeks ago, so that we may expect the proofs in a week or ten days. In regard to the name, it is certainly curious that no name should have been taken three times but I do not see how it is possible for me to alter it now when it is announced in London I was not at all aware that any work had before appeared under a similar title, but you could head it *James's* story without a name in the Magazine, but if any other title is given it must be by yourselves and not by

Yours faithfully,

G. P. R. James."

Soon after his arrival in America he appears to have become involved in some trouble with publishers. He writes from New York on October, 24, 1850, to Ollier:

* * * "Send no more sheets to Mr. Law till you hear from me again. My eyes have been opened since my arrival here. Four

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times the sum now paid can be obtained from Messrs. Harper, and negotiations are going on with them in which they must not have the advantage of having the sheets. You shall not lose by any new arrangement—of that you may trust to the word of one who has I think never failed you."

He adds, in a postscript: "Tell him [Mr. Newby] I have been shamefully imposed upon by false statements of the sale here and if I had taken his advice I should have been some hundreds of pounds richer."

On October 5, 1851, he writes from Stockbridge to Ollier:

"I have not written to you earlier because I wanted to find the treaty with Russia in regard to Copyright, and also to see the head of a great German house here in America so as to put you in the way of negotiating for the sale of my next book in Germany. But I have been too lame to leave my own house for anything but a morning's drive. I am so far better that I can now walk out for a mile or two, but my right hand and arm remain very painful. However, I think I shall be able to go to New York in ten days and will write to you from that place. * * * I am anxious

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to dedicate the first book I write to my own satisfaction, to Lord Charles Clinton. He is one of the noblest-minded men I ever met with—all truth and honor and straightforwardness. If you see him will you ask him for me whether he has any objection. The *Fate* is highly popular here—considered the best book I ever wrote—by the critics at least. The whole of the first chapter was read in the Supreme Court the other day before Chief Justice Shaw to prove what was the state of England in the reign of James II. So says the 'N. Y. Evening Post' and I suppose it is true. I wish I had you here with me to see the splendor of an American autumn in this most lovely scene. The landscape is all on fire with the coloring of the foliage and yet so harmoniously blended are the tints, from the brightest crimson to the deep green of the pines that the effect is that of a continuous sunset. Mountains, forests, lakes, streams are all in a glow round."

A letter to Ollier, written at Stockbridge on March 22, 1852, deals with some financial matters and then proceeds:

"I am glad to hear what you say of *Revenge*—though the title is not one I would myself

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have chosen, there being a tale of that name in the book of the Passions. I think it is a good book, better in conception than in execution perhaps. Your comparison of Richardson and Johnson with myself and you will not hold. You are scantily remunerated for much trouble. Johnson had done nothing that I can remember for Richardson. As to Richardson's parsimony towards the great, good man, you explain it all in one word. The former was rich. Do you remember the fine poem of Gaffer Grey—Holcroft's I believe—

‘The poor man alone,
To the poor man’s moan,
Of his morsel a morsel will give
Gaffer Grey.’

“But this rule is not without splendid exceptions, of which I will one day give you an instance, which I think will touch you much. At present I am writing in great haste in the grey of the morning with snow all around me, the thermometer at 18, and my hand nearly frozen. Verily, we have here to pay for the hot summer and gorgeous autumn in the cold silver coinage of winter.”

Another letter of his written from Win-

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chester, Virginia, November 6, 1853, to Ollier, has some interest. He writes thus:

"My Dear Ollier: Long before the arrival of your kind letter, which reached me only two days ago, I had directed Messrs. Harper to send me a revise of the first page of *Ticonderoga*, in order to transmit it to you for the correction of errors which had crept into the Ms. through the stupidity of the drunken beast who wrote it under my dictation. Harpers have never sent the revise, but I think it better to write at once in order to have one correction and one alteration made, which must be effected even at the cost of a cancel of the page—which of course I will pay for. The very first sentence should have inverted commas before it. These have been omitted in the copy left here, as well as the words 'so he wrote' or something tantamount, inserted at the end of the first clause of that sentence.
* * * I cannot feel that an appointment of any small value, to the dearest and most unhealthy city in the United States (with the exception of New Orleans) is altogether what I had a right to hope for or expect. You must recollect that I never asked for the consulate of Virginia, where there is neither society for

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my family, resources or companionship for myself, nor education to be procured for my little boy—where I am surrounded by swamps and marsh miasma, eaten up by mosquitoes and black flies, and baked under an atmosphere of molten brass, with the thermometer in the shade at 103—where every article of first necessity, with the exception of meat, is sixty per cent. dearer than in London—where the only literature is the ledger, and the arts only illustrated in the slave market.

"I hesitated for weeks ere I accepted; and only did so at length upon the assurances given that this was to be a step to something better, and upon the conviction that I was killing myself by excessive literary labors. Forgive me for speaking somewhat bitterly; but I feel I have not been well used. You have known me more than thirty years, and during that time I do not think you ever before heard a complaint issue from my lips. I am not a habitual grumbler; but 'the galled jade will wince.'

"I am very grateful to Scott for his kind efforts, and perhaps they may be successful; for Lord Clarendon, who is I believe a perfect gentleman himself, when he comes to consider the society in which I have been accustomed

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to move, my character, my habits of thought, and the sort of place which Norfolk is—if he knows anything about it—must see that I am not in my proper position there. He has no cause of enmity or ill-will towards me, and my worst enemy could not wish me a more unpleasant position. If I thought that I was serving my country there better than I could elsewhere, I would remain without asking for a change; but the exact reverse is the case. The slave dealers have got up a sort of outcry against me—I believe because under Lord Clarendon's own orders I have successfully prosecuted several cases of kidnapping negroes from the West Indies—and the consequence is that not a fortnight passes but an attempt is made to burn my house down. The respectable inhabitants of Norfolk are indignant at this treatment of a stranger, and the authorities have offered a reward of three hundred dollars for the apprehension of the offenders; but nothing has proved successful. This outcry is altogether unjust and unreasonable; for I have been perfectly silent upon the question of slavery since I have been here, judging that I had no business to meddle with the institutions of a foreign country in any way. But I will not suffer any men, when I

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can prevent or punish it, to reduce to slavery British subjects without chastisement.

"You will be sorry to hear that this last year in Norfolk has been very injurious to my health; and I am just now recovering from a sharp attack of the fever and ague peculiar to this climate. It seized me just as I set out for the West—the great, the extraordinary West. Quinine had no effect upon it, but I learned a remedy in Wisconsin which has cured the disease entirely, though I am still very weak. * * * "

He seems to have been tormented by ill health during all his period of residence at Norfolk. He writes to Ollier:

"British Consulate, Norfolk, Virginia, }
7th April, 1855. }

My Dear Ollier:

It has been impossible for me to write to you and it is now only possible for me to write a few lines as I have already had to do more than my tormented and feeble hands could well accomplish. For 10 weeks I was nailed to my chair with rheumatic gout in knees, feet, hips, hands, shoulder. For some time I could only sign my dispatches with my

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left hand and to some letters put my mark
Happily my feet, knees, &c., are well, but I
cannot get the enemy out of my hands and
arms. My shoulder is Sebastopol and will
not yield."

Another letter, also in my possession, I have
caused to be printed elsewhere. It is ad-
dressed to Ollier, and was written from Farn-
ham, Surrey, on July 26, 1848.

"My Dear Ollier: I do not suppose that I
shall be in town for a few days, and I think in
the meantime it would be better to send me
down the sheets with any observations you
may have to make. I shall be very happy to
cut, carve, alter and amend to the best of my
ability. The 'sum' can only be described as
'Heaven, Hell and Earth,' or if you like it
better, 'upstairs, downstairs, in my lady's
chamber.' But I suppose neither of these de-
scriptions would be very attractive and there-
fore perhaps you had better put 'The Sky, the
hall of Eblis, South Asia.' When it maketh its
appearance you had better for your own sake
take care of the reviewing; for I cannot help
thinking that with the critics at least, my name
attached to it is likely to do it more harm than

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good, unless friendly hands undertake the reviewing. The literary world always puts me in mind of the account which naturalists give of the birds called Puffs and Rees which alight in great bodies upon high downs and then each bird forms a little circle in which he runs round and round. As long as each continues this healthful exercise on the spot he has first chosen, all goes on quietly; but the moment any one ventures out of his own circle, all the rest fall upon him and very often a general battle ensues. I wish you could do anything for my book *Gowrie or the King's Plot*. I had a good deal of money embarked in it.

Yours faithfully,

G. P. R. James."

My letter of latest date indicates the time when he was transferred to Richmond.

British Consulate, Norfolk, Va.

3 May, 1856.

My Dear Mr. Kennedy:

* * * Lord Clarendon has ordered me to make every preparation for moving the Consulate of Virginia up to Richmond but not to do so until he has nominated a Vice Consul

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for Norfolk. He also wishes me to send him a detailed report regarding the late epidemic here and what between house hunting, office hunting, and trying to run down those foxes called rumors into their holes and to draw truth up from the bottom of her well in a place where people are as fanatical upon contagion and non-contagion as if they were articles of faith, I have had no peace of my life. My book I would have sent you but I could not get a copy worth sending. It has found favor in the South and is powerfully abused in the North, both which circumstances tend to increase the sale so that it has been wonderfully well read. * * * I am sorry I did not think of taking notes of all the winning conversations at Berkely. We might have made out together some few from the *Noctes Berkelianae*.

Yours ever,

G. P. R. James.

VII.

I was interested not long ago in a remark of the accomplished literary reviewer of the *Providence Journal* about reading for boys. He said: "As a matter of fact, there is plenty of good, healthy reading for boys if parents

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and teachers would do more to bring it to their attention. To say nothing of Scott—whom some degenerate youngsters in these days profess to find stupid—there are Ainsworth, G. P. R. James, Mayne Reid and hosts of others who can tell stories of adventure that any healthy minded boy will enjoy." I know well the sound and refined judgments of my Providence friend,—who castigated me once for my opinion that Cowper was not much read in these times—but I do not understand how he can imagine a boy of the twentieth century condescending to read Ainsworth or James. First and foremost, the novels are too long. The conventional three volumes demanded by the English public are revolting to the minds of the modern boys who want their fiction condensed and flavored with tabasco sauce. The Providence critic and I know—or think we know—what they ought to read, what would be good for their intellectual digestion; but we might as well offer them pre-digested tablets in lieu of chocolate creams. The young person will not now subsist on a diet of Ainsworth or of James. The long-spun dialogue would bore him. He calls for something more piquant; revels in slang; wants "sensation" and plenty

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of it, compressed in a small compass. As for the parents, they do not know much better themselves. The man of Providence well says: "The trouble is, as was pointed out in these columns recently in discussing the reading of girls, that the home atmosphere is all against any intelligent selection of books." The prevalent antagonism to all that is called "old-fashioned" is not limited to the young people, and the novels of James are, in comparison with the novels of to-day as old-fashioned as are the plays of Massinger in comparison with those of Bernard Shaw.

James has been compared to Dumas, and there are many things in common between the two authors—their voluminous publications, their bent towards the historical, and their use of an amanuensis. A critic, not very well disposed towards James, says in regard to this comparison: "Both had a certain gift of separating from the picturesque parts of history what could without difficulty be worked up into picturesque fiction, and both were possessed of a ready pen. Here, however, the likeness ends. Of purely literary talent, James had little. His plots are poor, his descriptions weak, his dialogue often below even a fair average, and he was deplorably

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prone to repeat himself."¹ This harsh judgment appears to me to be far too severe. His descriptions are not weak, and he surely had an advantage over Dumas in the matter of decency and morality.

But the most ardent admirers of this hard-working and conscientious toiler in the fields of literature must own that in all his multitudinous pages he has not given to the world a single character which has endured in the popular mind, and the Podsnap virtue of having written no word which could bring a blush to the cheek of the young person, cannot remedy this flaw in his title. Writers who rival him in productiveness but who are in many respects inferior to him, have nevertheless secured a more permanent place in the hall of fame, because they have been able to give to some of their personages a real and distinctive life. Leather-Stocking and Long Tom Coffin shine forth from the many wearisome chapters of Fenimore Cooper, Count Fosco and Captain Wragge from the ephemeral volumes of Wilkie Collins, and Mrs. Proudie from the placid chronicles of Anthony Trollope, but they have no kinsmen in the works of James. Even in the

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, XIII. 561 (Ninth Edition).

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historical stories no individual stands forth like Louis XI. in *Quentin Durward* or Rienzi in Bulwer's stirring tale. Nor has he left to posterity any brilliant *tour de force* like the "Jack Sheppard's Ride" of Harrison Ainsworth.

Whatever may be said of the diffuseness and sameness of the stories, of their want of definite plan, their lack of strength in the development of the characters who throng their pages, and the evidence they afford of hasty composition, it must be admitted that they are clean and dignified in tone and that they display a wonderful acquaintance with history as well as a faithful and conscientious use of the materials gathered with infinite pains and laborious research. These qualities, however, are not those which ensure literary immortality; and while it is possible that the best of the books may find from time to time readers incited to peruse them by a certain curiosity, and while the lovers of good stories may enjoy them, it is not likely that they will ever rank with the novels of Scott, of Thackeray, of Dickens, or even of Marryat and Lever, although they may occupy a place on the shelves of our libraries by the side of the old romances of the period of *Amadis de Gaul* or the forgotten tales of the younger Crebillon.

A LIST OF THE WORKS OF G. P. R. JAMES.

It is difficult to give an accurate list of James's books with the dates of their publication. The one given by Allibone is the most complete, but it is not always correct. The catalogue of the British Museum enumerates sixty-seven novels. The following does not include merely edited works or those prepared in collaboration with others, with a few exceptions. Those marked with an asterisk are reprinted in the collected edition of 1844-1849. I have been much helped not only in correcting the Allibone list, but in the preparation of the sketch of James, by Mr. G. H. Sass of Charleston, S. C., who is probably better informed about the subject than any one else in this country.

Life of Edward the Black Prince: 2 vols.: 1822. [Some accounts give 1836. See *ante*, page 204.]

The Ruined City: a poem.

Richelieu: 3 vols.: 1829.

*Darnley: 3 vols.: 1830.

*Del'Orme: 3 vols.: 1830.

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*Philip Augustus: 3 vols.: 1831.
Memoirs of Great Commanders: 3 vols.: 1832.
*Henry Masterton: 3 vols.: 1832.
History of Charlemagne: 1832.
*Mary of Burgundy: 3 vols.: 1833.
*Delaware: 3 vols.: 1833: (reprinted under title of "Thirty Years Since," 1848.)
*John Marston Hall: 3 vols.: 1834: (reprinted under title of "The Little Ball o' Fire," 1847.)
*One in a Thousand: 3 vols.: 1835.
*The Gipsey: 3 vols.: 1835.
Educational Institutions of Germany: 1836.
Lives of the Most Eminent Foreign Statesmen: 5 vols.: (4 by James, 1836, [1832?] 1838.)
Attila: 3 vols.: 1837.
Memoirs of Celebrated Women: 3 vols. (?) 1837.
*The Robber: 3 vols.: 1838.
Book of the Passions: 1838.
History of Louis XIV. 4 vols.: 1838.
*The Huguenot: 3 vols.: 1838.
Blanche of Navarre: a play: 1839.
Charles Tyrrell: 2 vols.: 1839.
*The Gentlemen of the Old School: 3 vols.: 1839.
*Henry of Guise: 3 vols.: 1839.

LIST OF THE WORKS OF G. P. R. JAMES

History of the United States Boundary Question: 1839.

* The King's Highway: 3 vols.: 1840.
The Man at Arms: 3 vols.: 1840.
Rose d'Albret: 3 vols.: 1840.
The Jacquerie: 3 vols.: 1841.
The Vernon Letters: 3 vols.: (edited) 1841.
* Castleneau; or the Ancient Regime: 3 vols.: 1841.

* The Brigand; or Corsede Leon: 3 vols.: 1841.
Corn Laws.

History of Richard Coeur de Lion: 4 vols.: 1841-42.

Commissioner; or De Lunatico Inquirendo: 1842.

* Morley Ernstein: 3 vols.: 1842.
Eva St. Clair, and Other Tales: 2 vols.: 1843.
The False Heir: 3 vols.: 1843.
* Forest Days: 3 vols.: 1843.
History of Chivalry: 1843.
* Arabella Stuart: 3 vols.: 1843.
* Agincourt: 3 vols.: 1844.
Arrah Neil: 3 vols.: 1845.
The Smuggler: 3 vols.: 1845.
Heidelberg: 3 vols.: 1846.
The Stepmother: 3 vols.: 1846.
Whim and its Consequences: 3 vols.: 1847.
Margaret Graham: 2 vols.: 1847.

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The Last of the Fairies: 1847.
The Castle of Ehrenstein: 3 vols.: 1847.
The Woodman: 3 vols.: 1847.
The Convict: 3 vols.: 1847.
Life of Henry IV. of France: 3 vols.: 1847.
Russell: 3 vols.: 1847.
Sir Theodore Broughton: 3 vols.: 1847.
Beauchamp: 3 vols.: 1848.
Carmazalaman; a Fairy Drama: 1848.
The Fight of the Fiddlers: 1848.
Forgery; or Best Intentions: 3 vols.: 1848.
* Gowrie; or the King's Plot: 1848.
Dark Scenes of History: 3 vols.: 1849.
John Jones' Tales from English History: 2 vols.: 1849.
A String of Pearls: 2 vols.: 1849. [His first written book; published 1839 (?); Allibone assigns its publication to 1849].
Ireland's "David Rizzio": 1849: (edited.)
Heathfield's "Means of Relief from Taxation": 1849: (edited.)
Henry Smeaton: 3 vols.: 1850.
The Fate: 3 vols.: 1851.
Revenge: (sometimes called A Story Without a Name) 3 vols.: 1851.
Pequinillo: 3 vols.: 1852.
Adrian; or the Clouds of the Mind: (jointly with M. B. Field) 2 vols.: 1852.

LIST OF THE WORKS OF G. P. R. JAMES

Agnes Sorel: 3 vols.: 1853.
Ticonderoga; or the Black Eagle: 3 vols.:
1854.
Prince Life: 1855.
The Old Dominion; or the Southampton
Massacre: 3 vols.: 1856.
Lord Montagu's Page: 1858.
The Cavalier: (Bernard March?) 1859.
Adra: or the Peruvians: a poem: (*circa*,
1829.)
The City of the Silent: a poem.
The Desultory Man: 3 vols.
Life of Vicissitudes.
My Aunt Pontypool: 3 vols.
The Old Oak Chest: 3 vols.





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